The TREASURE HOUSE of SECRETS

The TREASURE HOUSE *of* SECRETS

Discourse *on the* Blossom *of the* True Teaching

Seten Tomh

CHRONIKER PRESS ⁂ 2020

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Frontispiece is a hanging scroll painting depicting the Vulture Peak Assembly of the Lotus Sutra, National Treasure of South Korea 301 and is in the public domain.

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, 2019

ISBN 978-1-387-18899-4

chronikerpress.com
palisuttas.com

Dedicated with Fond Affection to the Memory of the Late
Shosen Michael Stone

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Foreword

The Lotus Sutra is the common English title of the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, literally the "Discourse on the True Law of the White Lotus." It is the basis of four schools of Mahayana Buddhism, the Tiantai, Tendai, Cheontae, and Nichiren, and is influential in Zen Buddhism. Many East Asian Buddhists regard the Lotus Sutra as the summation of the highest teachings of Buddhism.

Kogaku Fuse proposed in 1934 that the verse section of chapters I–IX and XVII are the oldest, dating them to the first century BCE, about the same time that the Pali Canon was first written down and the Prajnaparamita literature appeared. The prose section was added in the first century CE and the rest in two stages during the second century CE.

Tamura thinks that chapters II–IX were completed about 50 CE. Chapters X–XXII were added about 100 CE. Finally, chapters XXIII–XXVIII were added about 150 CE.[1]

The Lotus Sutra was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese three times: in 286 CE, by Dharmaraksa; in 406

[1] Tamura, *Introduction to the Lotus Sutra,* p. 44.

CE, by Kumarajiva; and a revised version of Kumarajiva's text in 601 CE by Jnanagupta and Dharmagupta.

Although no longer extant, many scholars now believe that the Lotus Sutra was originally composed in a Prakrit language similar to Pali, and then translated into Sanskrit and Chinese. It is, therefore, part of the Prakrit Buddhist legacy.

The Lotus Sutra is traditionally associated with the Innumerable Meanings Sutra, regarded as a prologue, and the Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra, as an epilogue (see Appendixes).

The Lotus Sutra was first translated into a European language by Eugene Burnouf and published in 1852. A chapter of the translation in progress was published in 1844 in the American transcendentalist magazine, *The Dial.* Hendrik Kern published the first and only complete English translation of the Sanskrit version in 1884. Seven English translations have been published to date (see References). Spanish and German translations also exist.

According to Donald Lopez, the Lotus Sutra presents "a radical revision of both the Buddhist path and of the person of the Buddha." Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Candrakirti, Santideva, and other authors in the Madyamaka and Yogacara schools frequently cite the Lotus.

Several commentaries on the Lotus Sutra exist, including an Indian commentary by Vasubandhu and a Chinese

commentary by Tao Sheng. Zhiyi wrote two commentaries on the Sutra. Tao Sheng and Zhiyi both related the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to the doctrine of the Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*). Dogen also refers frequently to the Lotus Sutra, and spent his last days reciting and writing from the Lotus Sutra in his hermitage, which he named "Lotus Sutra Hermitage." Hakuin Ekaku, the Rinzai Zen master, is said to have been enlightened while reading the third chapter of the Sutra.

Seten Tomh originally presented this commentary on the Lotus Sutra to the members of the Riverview Buddha Centre as a series of four one-hour talks in the summer of 2017.

Preface

Renowned in the West as the Buddhist "New Testament," the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra is revered by all Mahayana Buddhists. It might be described with equal justification as the Buddhist Quran, in that it claims to reestablish the primordial spiritual teaching. Thus, it bears significant resemblances to the Pali Canon. Many East Asians regard the Lotus Sutra as encoding the ultimate teaching of the Buddha. The book exists in Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, and Vietnamese versions, as well as many translations into Western languages.[2]

I have depended largely on Leon Hurvitz's *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (1976); *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* (1975), translated by Bunno Kato, Yoshiro Tamura, and Kjiro Miyasaka; and the classic Sanskrit translation of H. Kern (1884) that appeared in Max Muller's Sacred Books of the East series, Vol. XXI, still used by scholars such as A.K. Warder. The Lotus Sutra is often bound up with the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings and the Sutra of Meditation of the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue, as it is in *The Threefold Lotus Sutra,* as a preface and an epilogue

[2] See the References for a complete list of English translations.

respectively. I have approached the Lotus Sutra as a single synthetic work, working through the chapters in their straightforward formal order without regard to any questions of chronology. I have discussed my reasons for this non-time bound approach in my essay, "Hermeneutics and the Problem of Tradition" (chapter 1 of *Dharma Talks*, q.v.).

Whatever its development, the number of chapters of the final form of the Lotus Sutra, 28, is the number of the Moon (4 × 7), an important symbol of the dharma in the Pali Canon and elsewhere. Twenty-eight is also the number of historical buddhas listed in the Buddhavamsa, culminating in Gautama (Maitreya is #29).

Like another Chinese sutra, the Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment, the Lotus Sutra has been credited with at least one enlightenment experience (that of Hakuin Ekaku [1686–1768], reviver of the Rinzai school of Japanese Zen, while reading Chapter III).

Scholars have identified three main themes in the threefold division of the Sutra: the One Vehicle of the Wonderful Dharma, i.e., the essential oneness of all Buddhist ways; the Everlasting Original Buddha, the primordial Buddha archetype or paradigm; and the Way of the Wisdom Being (*bodhisattva*), emphasizing the method or path.

The Lotus Sutra and the Pali Canon

There is growing acceptance of the view that the original language of the earliest sections of the Lotus Sutra was not Sanskrit, but a Prakrit language, like Pali (Kern finds numerous vestiges of Magadhi and Pali in his translation of the Sanskrit version of the Lotus Sutra). Although clearly a Mahayana text, the Lotus Sutra is filled with references to the Pali Canon. As we know from my talk on "The Early Buddhist Schools," the Mahayana grew out of the early Hinayana schools rather than as a reaction against them, as is widely but wrongly believed.

The Lotus Sutra includes many references which will be familiar to readers of the Pali Canon: including places (Mount Grdhrakuta, Vulture Peak, the Buddha's favourite peak in Rajagaha), people (Mahakasyapa, Sariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Ananda, Rahula, Yasodhara, et al.), doctrines (arhantship, nirvana, *parinirvana,* the Four Great Truths, hearers, void or emptiness, perfect wisdom, self-born, self-concentration, skill, mantras, *tathagatas,* wheel of causes and effects [i.e., interdependent origination], samsara, sixty-two false views, and many others), and even events (e.g., the enlightenment of and subsequent preaching by the Buddha and the trope of remembering similar situations with disciples in past lives),[3] but the Lotus Sutra represents a radical re-visioning of the meaning and

[3] *Saddharma-Pundarika or the Lotus of the True Law,* p. 72.

significance of the Buddhist project as it introduces a new understanding of the goal of attainment and the character of the path itself.

While it is fashionable to say that the Lotus Sutra is rhetorical and has no real content, one can identify over a hundred essential concepts throughout the Lotus Sutra, all organized around the central revelation of the Lotus Sutra, identified by A.K. Warder with the fifteenth chapter of the book.[4] Warder is probably referring to chapter XV of Kern's Sanskrit edition, which is chapter XVI of the Chinese edition, since chapter XII was split in two in the fifth or sixth century. None of the content was lost, although there are subtle differences between the Sanskrit and the Chinese versions. Scholars remain uncertain as to which version was first.

The Symbol of the Lotus

The Sanskrit word *pundarika* means "lotus flower," as well as the colour "white." Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains all revere the lotus. Buddhists regard it as a symbol of body, speech, and mind. Rooted in the mud of samsara, the lotus flower blooms on the surface of the water, untainted by the mud from which it draws its nourishment. It also symbolizes non-attachment since water rolls easily off its

[4] See A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism,* 3rd rev. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), p. 375f.

smooth petals. Many Asian deities are depicted sitting on lotus flowers. When the Bodhisattva first walked, lotus flowers were said to bloom from his footprints. Padmasambhava is also said to have been born sitting on a lotus flower at the age of eight.

The Idea of the Tathagata

Tathagata is a somewhat mysterious word that the Buddha uses throughout the Pali Canon with reference to himself, and less frequently with reference to adepts (*arhants*). It is generally translated as "one who has thus gone" or "one who has thus come." The word is used as though it were familiar to its audience, but has not been found in any pre-Buddhist context. Even as early as Buddhaghosa (5th century CE) the exact meaning of the word was uncertain. In his commentary on the Digha Nikaya, Buddhaghosa gives eight alternative definitions: one who has arrived or walked in such a way; one who knows reality; one who has won, discerned, or declares truth; one whose deeds accord with his words; and the great doctor whose medicine cures all ills.

The Anguttara Nikaya says that the Tathagata is called such because what is seen, heard, sensed, and cognized, attained, searched into, and pondered over by the mind is fully understood. In other words, the Tathagata is one who

understands. Tathata refers to "thusness" or "suchness," reality in itself. Richard Gombrich has suggested that the word means "one like that." The word appears in the Mahabharata where it says, "Thus (*tatha*) is gone (*gati*) of those who have realized the Truth."

In the Pali Canon, the Tathagata is described as immeasurable, inscrutable, hard to fathom, and not apprehended. Similarly, the Lotus Sutra refers frequently to the "mystery of the Tathagatas." The Tathagata is free of karmic tendencies (*samskaras*), and is thus beyond the comprehension of other beings. They are "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable, like the mighty ocean." Although this is sometimes taken to imply that the Tathagata has no post-mortem existence, this is strictly speaking not necessarily implied, since it does not follow that because something cannot be seen that it does not exist. The Buddha explicitly rejects nihilism, and his use of the tetralemma is far more profound than simple negation. Edward Conze says that in the Mahayana view the Tathagata refers to the true inherent selfhood of the human being. However, we must remember that this "selfhood" is not the inherently self-existing atomic "noun" self of the Upanishads but a continuous but essentially transient consecution of sentience. It is the process philosophy of Whitehead or the "I seem to be a verb" of R. Buckminster Fuller.

The Lotus Sutra appears to have originated in Kashmir during the Fourth Buddhist Council of the Sarvastivadin school.[5] In the Pali tradition, the Pali Canon was written down during the Fourth Buddhist Council in the first century BCE.[6] The Sarvastivadin Fourth Buddhist Council is believed to have been held during the reign of the Kusana emperor Kaniska (78–102 CE),[7] confirming Tamura's chronology of the Lotus Sutra. Interestingly, the tradition that the Lotus Sutra appeared five hundred years after the *Parinirvana*[8] corresponds to 423–399 BCE, which is not far off the increasingly accepted view that the Buddha died between 410 and 370 BCE.[9] Although the Theravadins do not accept the authority of this council, the Sarvastivada was an influential Hinayana school that split off from the Sthaviravada in the third century BCE, during the reign of King Ashoka, the same school from which the Theravada

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[5] New World Encyclopedia, "Lotus Sutra," http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Lotus_Sutra. Kalupahana (*History of Buddhist Philosophy* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992], p. 173) relates the philosophy of the Lotus to the Sautrantika school, a later derivative from the Sarvastivadas that originated about 50 CE but was not consolidated into a school until the second century (Warder, *Indian Buddhism,* p. 279).

[6] Wikipedia, "Pali Canon," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pāli_Canon.

[7] Warder, *Indian Buddhism,* p. 317.

[8] New World Encyclopedia, op. cit.

[9] Ancient History Encyclopedia, "The Dates of the Buddha," http://www.ancient.eu/article/493.

claims descent. Warder notes that the Sarvastivada was the least conservative Hinayana school.[10] Modern scholars believe that the Lotus Sutra was originally written in a Prakrit similar to Pali, and then translated into Sanskrit, like the Sarvastivada canon.[11] It is ironic that the Lotus Sutra, arguably the most influential and important Mahayana sutra, seems to have originated as the work of a Hinayana school!

[10] Warder, op. cit., p. 325. An extensive collection of texts from the Dharmaguptaka canon, called the Gandhari mss, has been discovered in eastern Afghanistan, the scholarly study of which should add greatly to our understanding of the Pali Canon.

[11] Wikipedia, "Lotus Sutra."

The Treasure House of Secrets

Chapter 1
Introduction[12]

"The Lion of the Shakyas is to make an exhortation, to declare the fixed nature of the Law."

The Lotus Sutra begins with the traditional words, "Thus have I heard," referring to a story or tradition handed down from the past. Thus, the Sutra explicitly identifies itself with the *Buddhavacana,* the Buddha Word, despite its obvious non-historical or trans-historical character. The authors of the Sutra, who were

[12] *Nidana Parivartah* consists of two Sanskrit words, *nidana* and *parivartah.* The title of every chapter of the Lotus Sutra ends in *parivartah,* which means "chapter." *Nidana* means "a primary or first cause, linked cause" or "cause, motivation, or occasion," from *ni,* "down, into" + *da,* "to bind." In Buddhism, it refers to the Buddha's theory of cause and effect known as the interdependent origination (*pratityasamutpada*). Thus, this first chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which was added about 100 CE to contextualize the first and second recensions of the Sutra, refers to a chapter that explains the context of the events of the Lotus Sutra, including their causes and conditions.

presumably not fools, must have understood this very well and yet they chose to present the Sutra in a trans-historical context in order to make two points: (1) to identify the Sutra with the *Buddhavacana,* and (2) to demonstrate the transience and non-self-identity of historicity itself, and by this means to demonstrate the absolutely atemporal and transcendent character of the True Dharma that leads to utter emancipation. In other words, the form and format of the Lotus Sutra is itself a skilled method!

That said, the Sutra opens with the Buddha teaching the monastics on Vulture Peak, a favourite place of the Buddha outside Rajagaha. The Sutra improbably identifies the impossible number of twelve thousand adepts, and proceeds to name the top twenty-one. The names are familiar to us from the Pali Canon, but the situation is anything but "Paliesque." The reader is transported into an alternate universe in which the ordinary limitations of time and space do not apply. This world is the world of pure mind. In case the reader has not "got it" yet, the Sutra goes on to number 180,016 monastics, wisdom beings, various "divine sons," "four great heavenly kings," eight dragon kings, and other *kimnaras, gandharvas,* asuras, and *garudas,* plus as many as perhaps two or more million attendants. Clearly, what is being described here is a parallel universe that coincides with our world but obeys different natural laws: in short, the world of dreams, the imaginative realm, or the human

psyche, which is itself, it should not be forgotten, a dimension of reality.

The inclusion in this list of four asura kings is very interesting in light of a long passage in the Vinaya where the asuras are spoken highly of and associated with concealed treasures and another passage in the suttas where many asuras come to honour the Buddha. These references echo an archaic teaching wherein the devas and asuras were not at war. The whole pyramid culminates in King Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha whose devout father, Bimbisara, supported the Buddha. After murdering his father and following a policy of violent expansion based on conquest, rather like Ashoka, Ajatashatru began to worry about the afterlife and became a supporter of the Buddha like the father he had murdered. However, he also patronized the Jains.

According to the Sutra, the Buddha preached the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, often published as a preface to the Lotus Sutra (see Appendix I). The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings gives teachings on virtue, preaching, and merit. After preaching the Sutra, he entered an altered state of consciousness or meditative state called "the contemplation of the station of innumerable meanings." His body and mind became perfectly still. The sky rained down flowers and the earth shook. From his *ajna* chakra in the centre of the forehead a vector of attention emanated in the

form of a laser-like light beam that illuminated eighteen thousand eastern worlds, revealing all sorts of beings including living and deceased buddhas, seekers, and wisdom beings.

The assembly marvels at the spectacle, including Maitreya, the Future Buddha, who asks Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, the cause of it all. Manjushri tells Maitreya and the assembly that the Buddha is about to declare the Great Dharma that is hard to believe. Manjushri attributes the ultimate origin of this teaching to a trans-historical Buddha called "Sun Moon Light Tathagata."

Manjushri says that the Buddha teaches three paths for three different sorts of person: For the disciples he declares the Four Noble Truths, based on the principle of *dukkha* or universal suffering, leading to nirvana. For the hermits he declares the doctrine of interdependent origination (*pratityasamutpada*), based on the principle of emptiness, leading to self-realization. In addition, for the wisdom beings he teaches the Six Perfections,[13] based on the principle of compassion, leading to Buddhahood. "Sun Moon Light" also teaches the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, which teaches the path of bodhisattvahood, and enters trance as the Buddha had done.

[13] Self-sacrifice, self-control, indifference or non-differentiation, energy, mental concentration, wisdom.

Manjushri goes on to articulate many varied ways that one can seek the Buddha-way, including generosity; monasticism; memorizing, reading, reciting, studying, and realizing the dharma; renunciation; devotion; and the cultivation of the qualities of radiance; energy; self-control; submission; meditation; self-sacrifice; science; and wisdom or indifference; and finally the practice of stupa worship.

When Manjushri finishes, the Buddha emanates another light beam that illuminates eighteen thousand eastern Buddha lands. Manjushri says that he was the Bodhisattva "Mystic Light," the disciple and successor of the Buddha "Sun Moon Light," and that Maitreya was the Bodhisattva "Fame Seeker," who was a disciple of "Mystic Light." Manjushri announces that the Buddha is about to preach the True Dharma.

It seems to be a universal spiritual idea, found in many religions including Gnosticism and native American spirituality, among others, that the universe is a vast, intricate and labyrinthine, multidimensional and interconnected network wherein all sorts of sentient beings appear in effectively infinite numbers at all stages of spiritual development and in all sorts of conditions over vast ages of time. Such a world includes a great number of non-ordinary possibilities. This is the fundamental cosmic conception. Everything in the Lotus Sutra is of astronomical proportions, which in turn comments on the

original teachings of the Buddha and the kind of worlds of experience that they reveal to the pure mind of the enlightened observer.

Chapter II
The Method[14]

"This is the fixed vow of the Tathagatas: Let me, by accomplishing my course of duty, lead others to enlightenment."

Rousing from his trance, the Buddha declares to Sariputra, the disciple foremost in wisdom in the Pali Canon, that the Buddha wisdom **and its wisdom school** cannot be understood or entered respectively by mere disciples (*srvakas*) or hermits (*pratyekabuddhas*). Nevertheless, countless buddhas throughout time have used many teachings and clever stratagems to lead living beings to the ultimate realization.

The skill and wisdom of the Tathagata, however, is perfect; his mind has grasped the Infinite. Only a Buddha can know the Reality of All Existence in its totality. The disciples and hermits in the assembly are perplexed, including Sariputra himself, but the Buddha declines Sariputra's request to explain the revelation of the Lotus Sutra, declaring that neither the divine nor the human realms are prepared to know the truth. On the second request the Buddha declines again, stating further that gods,

[14] This chapter is the true beginning of the original Lotus Sutra.

men, and anti-gods (*asuras*) are not prepared for the truth and that wrong-headed monastics might fall into hellish realms if they misunderstand.

After the third request, the Buddha relents, in accord with custom, whereupon five thousand monastics and householders walk out of the assembly due to their ignorance, spontaneously purifying the assembly, as during the *uposatha* observance described in the Pali Canon. Sariputra, however, remained. The Buddha tells Sariputra that this doctrine is only revealed by a Buddha every three thousand years to teach human beings the Buddha wisdom concerning the pure mind that is true but trans-linguistic. This teaching is only for wisdom beings. It is the truly universal, non-sectarian dharma teaching, the singular truth to which all of the contingent skilled methods and systems of Buddhist philosophy and doctrines testify implicitly, leading beyond reason to perfect wisdom.

This process is eternal and ongoing. In a degenerate age (such as that in which we live), the dharma is taught by skilled methods to accommodate all the different imperfections of beings, to bring as many beings as possible to the realization of the truth. The Buddha declares especially that adepts should seek out Buddhahood and declares that, in the end, all those who aspire to Buddhahood, even if only for a moment, will achieve Buddhahood, in accordance with the inexorable law of

karma whereby every cause must result in an effect and every effect must be the result of a cause.

Chapter III
A Parable

"It is most excellent and sweet, the most exalted in the world, that knowledge of the Buddhas, the most high among men; it is something sublime and adorable."

Sariputra is ecstatic listening to the Buddha's words, but asks why the Buddha preaches the dharma of the "great vehicle" by means of the "small vehicle"? Sariputra blames it on the karmic limitations of the Buddha's hearers, who set up adeptship in place of Buddhahood as the goal of the path. Later, the Buddha says that samsaric beings need samsaric means and must realize the nature of samsara, illusory as it is, before they can realize the wisdom of the buddhas, "reality as it is." This is of course an implicit reference to the Hinayana.

The Buddha teaches realization by means of three vehicles: the disciple, which leads to the realization of nirvana; the hermit, which leads to self-realization; and the way of the wisdom being, which leads to the perfect wisdom of Buddhahood. The adepts pursue "science with a master," and thus are epiphenomenonal, but the buddhas are primogenitary. No one can deny this. The hermits and

buddhas are self-ordained ("self-born") and pursue "science without a master." Interestingly, the texts agree that Buddhahood is possible even in a dark age where the dharma is not known.

The Buddha tells Sariputra that in fact he, the Buddha, "caused" Sariputra to pursue the way of the wisdom being many ages ago, and facetiously compares Sariputra's attainment of nirvana (lit. "extinction") with ignorance of reality (the antithesis of enlightenment, which is traditionally characterized by the memory of past lives). The Buddha preaches the Lotus Sutra to reawaken the memory of Sariputra's bodhisattva vow. The Buddha predicts that Sariputra will be reborn many ages in the future as a Buddha called "Flower Light Tathagata." The Buddha goes on to describe his Buddha-land in highly ornate language, which echoes the Pali Canon.

The assembly spontaneously removes their robes (!) and they offer them to the Buddha as a homage. Devas, brahmas, and divine sons all pay homage to the Buddha with robes and flowers. Suddenly the robes start to dance in the sky to the sounds of celestial music! A voice is heard declaring that the Buddha has rolled the wheel of the dharma a second time since Varanasi, the place near Sarnath where the Buddha delivered his first sermon called "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma" in the First Dispensation, circa 445 BCE. Thus, the Lotus Sutra

announces the advent of a Second Dispensation of the True Dharma about 50 CE. This is also the end of the first five hundred year cycle as it happens.

The Buddha tells Sariputra the famous parable of the burning house, immortalized in the poem of Bertolt Brecht.[15] A great elder, old and rich, lives in a mansion with only a single small door but with hundreds of inhabitants including many non-human beings and thirty young sons. Like the elder himself, the huge house is old, and a fire trap. Suddenly it catches fire! The elder realizes that although he can save himself, his children are so preoccupied by their games that they have no impulse to flee. He calls to his children to flee, but they are so innocent and preoccupied by their amusements that they heed him not. Therefore, the father lies to his children, declaring that outside the gate they will find many toys to play with.

This device is identified with what the translator translates as "tactful means" (*upaya*), more conventionally translated as "skilled" or "expedient means" or method. Thus, the children rush outside and escape the fire. However, instead of giving the children toys he gives each one a fine chariot, with curtains, bullocks, servants, and guards. Note the symbolism of the *chariot.* In Cabala, the chariot (*merkabah*) is a symbol of the Great Work. We also

[15] Brecht, "The Buddha's Parable of the Burning House."

find the symbolism of the chariot in the Tarot trump of the same name.

The message of the parable is that skilled method is a deception designed to lure the ignorant into the true dharma, where the lie is a metaphor for the truth that incorporates the cognitive limitations of those to whom it is addressed. On the other hand, one could also say that truth itself is a form of falsehood, since all cognitions are limited, mere labels. Thus, the truth of the dharma is trans-linguistic. Because it is trans-linguistic, it can only be learned from one who has already realized it, i.e., a Tathagata.

Chapter IV
Transcendent Liberation

"We have obtained unexpectedly and without longing the jewel of omniscience, which we did not desire nor seek, nor search after, nor expect, nor require; and that inasmuch as we are the sons of the Tathagata."

Subhuti and several other adepts are awestruck and ecstatic. Rising and arranging their garments, and making obeisance to the Buddha, they ask the Buddha for a parable of the dharma, referring to the void, formlessness, and non-function.[16] These seem to refer to the "three gates of emancipation" of the Hinayana, but the Sutra of the Dharma Seal, where they are summarized, is Mahayana.

The Buddha tells a parable of a man who runs away from his father as a youth and stays away for several decades. As he grows older, he becomes needier. He wanders about the countryside searching for food and clothing. Thus, he returns to his native land. In the meantime, his father has

[16] Kern has "vanity," "purposelessness," and the "unfixed." The Pali words *sunnata, animitta,* and *appanihita* mean "emptiness," "motiveless," and "free from desire." Akira has "nonsubstantiality," "signlessness," and "wishlessness" (*History of Indian Buddhism* [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990], p. 56).

become rich. Over the course of the years, he has missed his son, regretting his leaving, and wishing to find him so that he can bequeath his legacy to his son, other than whom he has no heirs. By chance, the son arrives at his father's house. The father recognizes the son, but the son does not recognize the father. Rather, he sees the wealth of the man and flees, thinking that he might be seized. The father sends servants after the son, who try to subdue the son by force but he resists. The father, realizing that this method will not work, develops a stratagem. He employs his son under the guise of a common householder, and over the course of the years, he befriends his son, until finally he openly reveals that this is his son and heir. In this way, he gradually brings his son to the truth of his patrimony, but not in such a way as would traumatize or overwhelm him.

The father is the Tathagata; the adepts are the Buddha's sons. Through adeptship and the realization of nirvana, the Tathagata brings his "sons" to the realization of the Buddha or Tathagata wisdom of the bodhisattva path of the One Way. Thus, the Lotus Sutra is saying that Hinayana is really Mahayana, or at least the opening to Mahayana, but the adepts do not know this. Put another way, Hinayana reveals the dharma from the perspective of samsaric ignorance; Mahayana, from the perspective of enlightenment, which transcends nirvana and samsara.

Nirvana itself is just part of the dualistic Hinayana construct, and is itself to be transcended in true realization.

Chapter V
Healing Medicine

"I am the Dharmaraja, born in the world as the destroyer of existence."

The Buddha tells Kasyapa, the adept who recited the verse portion of the previous chapter, that a Tathagata is full of merit and cannot tell a lie, a doctrine that we find propounded in the Pali Canon. He is the king of the dharma. His exposition of the dharma is skilled (*upaya*). The dharma of the Tathagata leads to the "stage" of "perfect knowledge." Having perfect understanding of the dharma, he reveals the wisdom of perfect knowledge, all-knowing intelligence, or Buddha wisdom to all.

The Buddha compares the Tathagata to a cloud pouring down rain throughout the universe, fertilizing every sort of medicinal plant. "From the rain of one cloud [each] according to the nature of its kind acquires its development, opening its blossoms and bearing its fruit. Though produced in one soil and moistened by the same rain, yet these plants and trees are all different." From the diversity of life, the Buddha infers the manifestation of the dharma adapting itself to the conditions in which it manifests. This

is of course a characteristic of all living beings. The Tathagata spreads the dharma throughout the "three-thousand-great thousandfold world" (the chiliocosm), including gods, men, and asuras, which might be compared to the current scientific understanding of existence as consisting of a vast number of planets, stars, galaxies, and universes in potentially infinite proliferation. Buddhism understood that the structure of existence is recursive, i.e., infinitely differentiated through repetition, like a fractal, and totally interconnected at the most fundamental level. The Buddha teaches the dharma to all beings in all ways, as it is written in the Pali Canon, "each for himself," thus benefitting all beings and bringing them all to the dharma according to each one's innate nature and capacity at the moment, thus effecting the regeneration of the world, beyond the duality of nirvana and samsara.

The Tathagata teaches the "unitary essential law" that consists of deliverance from mortality, abandonment of nihilism, extinction of the extremes, and finally the perfect knowledge or wisdom concerning the "seeds" by which everything grows and develops according to its own nature. Only the Tathagata knows which stage each being is at. The final resolution is the "final nirvana of eternal tranquility, ending in return to the void." The realization of the essential emptiness of existence is the method.

Chapter VI
The Prophesies

"His magic power, while he reveals supreme enlightenment, is inconceivable."

The Buddha predicts that Mahakasyapa, who instigated the First Buddhist Council, will become a Buddha called "Radiance Tathagata" in the far future. The Buddha enunciates the doctrine of the three dharma stages or phases, called Righteous Law, Counterfeit Law, and Decline of the Law. After the decline of the Law, a new Buddha appears to renew the dharma and regenerate the process. Each of these stages lasts for many ages, and thus lies beyond historical time. The transcendent Buddha paradigm or archetype itself acts in the world timelessly, revealing the dharma. The Buddha makes similar predictions with respect to other adepts in the assembly.

Chapter VII
The Ancient Way

"Move forward the wheel, O thou whose sight is infinite! Rarely art thou met in the course of many kotis of Aeons. Display the benevolence thou hast observed in so many former generations; open the gate of immortality."

Chapter VII of the Lotus Sutra introduces a trans-historical Buddha named Universal Surpassing Wisdom (Mahabhijnajnanabhibhu). This Buddha had sixteen sons prior to his enlightenment. According to the Sanskrit version of the Lotus Sutra, the "Brahma heavenly kings" travel vast distances ("five hundred myriad kotis of domains," a *koti* itself referring to tens or hundreds of millions or more), coming from all directions in search of the luminous phenomenon that accompanies the enlightenment of Universal Surpassing Wisdom, to the Bodhi tree in the "western quarter" in their "aerial cars" (the Chinese commentaries describe these as mobile like carriages), where they circle him hundreds of thousands of times and strew him with flowers.

These "aerial cars" are themselves described as luminous. The alternative translation, "palaces," suggests that these "aerial cars" are inhabited. I have discussed the relationship

between the UFO phenomenon and Buddhism in "Buddhism and the UFO Phenomenon" (chapter 9 of *Dharma Talks,* q.v.).[17] They entreat the Buddha to reveal the dharma after 180 ages of ignorance.

The Buddha introduces the topic of time dilation, declaring, "by the power of my Tathagata-wisdom, I observe the length of time as if it were only today." He also alludes to Buddhist cosmology, specifically the realm of the thirty-three. Usually this is interpreted with reference to the thirty-three gods of the Vedic pantheon. Here, however, the translator considers the number to refer to the number of "heavens." Trayastrimsa is of course the topmost realm of the worlds of Sumeru and the second realm of the Gods of Desire, two realms above the human, between the Four Great Kings and Yama, the god of death and time.

Universal Surpassing Wisdom teaches the Four Great Truths and the Law of the Twelve Causes, a.k.a. Interdependent Origination, in both forward and reverse order, culminating in the annihilation of old age, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, and distress, in response to which billions and trillions of beings have their minds freed.

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[17] Cf. "The Buddha-vehicle is the ratha ekakakra, the one-wheeled carriage [sic!], each wheel being trinabhi, three-naved, as in Rig-veda I, 164, 2" (Kern, op. cit., p. 81 n. 2). "Nave" refers to the hub of a wheel. The Rig Veda says, "Seven to the one-wheeled chariot yoke the Courser; bearing seven names the single Courser draws it. Three-naved the wheel is, sound and undecaying, whereon are resting all these worlds of being."

Finally, he preaches the Lotus Sutra to his four sons and their followers. However, although half the assembly accept and believe in the Lotus Sutra, half doubt it. After this Universal Surpassing Wisdom goes into retreat and practises meditative absorption for 84,000 ages. Meanwhile, his sons disseminate the Lotus Sutra.

Universal Surpassing Wisdom emerges from his retreat and declares that everyone who believes in the Lotus Sutra will attain "the Tathagata-wisdom of Perfect Enlightenment." The Buddha (Shakyamuni, the original speaker of the Lotus Sutra) identifies himself with the sixteenth son of Universal Surpassing Wisdom. All of Universal Surpassing Wisdom's sons become buddhas in different places, and the Buddha himself teaches the dharma under different names. Thus, the Buddha teaches the fundamental axiom of the perennial or ancient philosophy, of which historical Buddhism is just one manifestation.

The Buddha distinguishes between two nirvanas, initial and final, the former associated with causalism and imperfect, but the distinction is still mysterious. In fact, we find a parallel distinction in the Pali Canon, between nirvana "with residue" (or "substrate"), which the Buddha experienced at the age of 35, and "final nirvana" (*parinirvana*), without substrate, which the Buddha experienced at the age of 80, when his physical body died.

This is called "[real] extinction." Only by the skilled method (*upaya*) of the single or Buddha vehicle of the Tathagata, which is identical with the bodhisattva way, is final nirvana attained. The Lotus Sutra can only be understood by those who have penetrated or comprehended the dharma of the void or emptiness, which the Buddha says is the essence of the Law of the Twelve Causes.

The Buddha teaches a parable where a group of travellers on a long, hard, winding path, led by a seasoned guide, become exhausted and distraught at not reaching the goal and want to turn back. Thus, the guide conjures the mirage of a beautiful city where the travellers can rest, and tells them that that is the goal. Therefore, the travellers enter the illusory city with great hope, satisfied and refreshed, certain that they have reached the end. Once they are content, the guide tells them that the city is illusory, and entreats them to make the final trek to the Place of Jewels, the true goal. Thus, they come to final emancipation. This story is like the story of the raft in the Pali Canon.

Chapter VIII
The Power of Renunciation

"There will be cars of gods stationed in the sky; the gods will behold men, and men will behold the gods."

Purna, son of Maitrayani, one of the ten disciples of the Buddha, noted for his eloquence, rises and praises the Buddha. The Buddha praises Purna too, declaring that next to himself Purna is the most lucid. The Buddha predicts that he will become the Buddha "Radiance of the Law Tathagata." The Buddha declares that his "Buddha-land" will be as large as a chiliocosm, wherein the gods will inhabit "palaces … in the sky."

We have already noted the alternative translation of "palaces" as "aerial cars," and the context makes it clear that here we are referring to a universe, not a planet. The Sutra states that men and gods will behold each other in these celestial palaces. Interestingly, his Buddha-land will have no females, because there will be no carnal passion (presumably they will be "spontaneously born," like the devas in the Pali Canon). The inhabitants of Purna's Buddha-land will be luminous and have the power of flight. The Buddha predicts the future destiny and Buddhahood of 1,200 adepts.

The adepts declare their realization that the adept's nirvana is unsatisfactory and that more remains to be done. The Buddha originally taught Perfect Wisdom, which is implicitly identified with Buddhahood, but the adepts settled for partial or incomplete nirvana because that was the easier path. Now they realize that adeptship is merely a prelude to Buddhahood, that is, the path of the wisdom being, and they declare their aspiration to achieve the final, real nirvana of complete and perfect Buddhahood.

Chapter IX
Ananda's Divine Activity

"I am freed from all doubts; I am ready for enlightenment."

The Buddha predicts the future Buddhahood of his disciples. Ananda will become the Buddha "Sovereign Universal King of Wisdom [Great as] Mountains and Oceans Tathagata." Ananda's attainment of Buddhahood is his reward for an ancient vow to treasure the dharma.

The Buddha predicts that Rahula will become the Buddha "Treader on Seven-Jewelled Lotuses Tathagata."

The Buddha tells Ananda that two thousand adepts will attain Buddhahood in the far future.

Recap

The Lotus Sutra is rooted in the Pali tradition and maybe even in the Pali or at least a similar Prakrit language. Although it appears extremely innovative, we know from "The Early Buddhist Schools" that about half of the early Hinayana schools were moving toward a more imaginative understanding of the dharma. The original stratum of the Lotus Sutra goes back to the first century BCE, about the same time that the Pali Canon was first written down. The Lotus Sutra is highly revered by Mahayana Buddhists and has even been credited with triggering enlightenment in at least one receptive reader, Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1768), reviver of the Rinzai school of Japanese Zen, while reading the third chapter. Three large themes have been identified in the Lotus Sutra:

- The ultimate unity of all teachings;
- The primordial Buddha archetype; and
- The bodhisattva vow (*bodhicitta*) as the essential method of liberation.

The lotus is a Buddhist symbol of body, speech, and mind. The lotus flower or blossom is an emblem of realization, untainted despite being rooted in the mud of samsara. Similarly, the wisdom being enjoys the fruits of

realization but remains involved in the world out of compassion for suffering beings.

In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha refers to himself as the Tathagata, a somewhat mysterious word well translated by Hurvitz as the "Thus Come One." The Lotus Sutra is the revelation of the essential mystery of the Tathagata, conceived in the interiority of his own enlightened mind. Thus, the Lotus Sutra is the direct manifestation of enlightenment itself, whereas the Pali Canon manifests enlightenment through the conditionality of unenlightened and samsaric experience. Thus, the Lotus Sutra is radiant and ecstatic, whereas the Pali suttas largely (though not exclusively) emphasize suffering and ignorance. This insight explains the essential difference of form between Hinayana and Mahayana.

The Lotus Sutra declares itself to be *Buddhavacana,* the authentic word of the Buddha, yet it is presented in an obviously trans-historical way, thus raising the question of what it means to be *Buddhavacana* and the nature of reality itself. The phantasmagorical world of the Lotus Sutra is a fantastic dharma display imagined from the perspective of direct realization. The Lotus Sutra is a sort of opera, wherein the Buddha is the central figure of a vast cast of innumerable sorts of beings, all engaged in a series of grand speeches and gestures, in the course of which the Buddha progressively reveals his superior and indeed superlative,

transcendent understanding of the dharma. It is a remarkable coincidence that the Lotus Sutra originated about the same time that Jesus taught the Gospel in Galilee and Jerusalem, fufilling the same function in relation to Judaism.

The cosmology of the Lotus Sutra is the cosmology of Buddhism: an extended horizontal dimension consisting of a virtual infinity of universes, galaxies, stars, planets, beings, and atoms, as a single plane of a vertically extended hierarchy of greater or lesser degrees of energy, sentience, suffering, wisdom, and power. Broadly, this vertical axis consists of the divine realm, the human realm, and the demonic realm. The whole system functions in accordance with the law of causality (*karma*) and the principle of interdependent origination (*pratityasamutpada*).

This includes astronomical phenomena and luminous aerial "cars" or palaces, time dilation, and travelling through higher dimensions of experience over vast epochs of time. Here gods and men interact.

The Buddha's teaching method is described as a stratagem or "skilled method" (*upaya*) whereby an infinity of buddhas throughout time seek to communicate the dharma to suffering beings by the most effective means adapted to the strengths or limitations of the hearers themselves, thus creating the appearance of a great diversity of teachings, whereas there is in fact only one teaching and one method

that leads to one singular end: supreme non-dual enlightenment, *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi,* which may be literally rendered as "ultimate perfect wisdom." The dharma is like a universal rain nourishing the diversity of beings everywhere in the multiverse without distinction.

The Lotus Sutra declares that all methods are merely preparations for the path of the wisdom being, without which perfect wisdom and ultimate enlightenment cannot be experienced. Moreover, the Buddha declares that ultimately all beings who aspire to enlightenment, even but for an instant, will experience complete and perfect enlightenment in accordance with the law of causality (*karma*), since every effect is the result of a cause and every cause must produce its correlative effect sooner or later. All possess the "precious jewel" of Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*) within themselves, and therefore enlightenment itself is everyone's inherent own-nature from the very beginning. Ultimately, ignorance and even nirvana are illusions.

Chapter X
True Teachers

"This indeed is the transcendent spiritual esoteric lore of the law, preserved by the power of the Tathagatas, but never divulged; it is an article of creed not yet made known."

Chapter X of the Lotus Sutra represents the second phase of development of the Sutra, about fifty years after the first phase, represented by chapters 2 through 9. In this chapter the Buddha addresses eighty thousand "great leaders" headed by Medicine King Tathagata (Bhaisajyaraja). In a former life, this wisdom being vowed to heal the physical and mental infirmities of all beings, providing many efficacious remedies for monastics.

Having heard something of the history of the Medicine Buddha, skeptics might object, how can we know that such a wisdom being ever lived and if they did not exist, how can the cult of the Medicine Buddha be effective? The Tantrics will tell you that the "historical" biography of the Medicine Buddha is only his most exoteric or superficial aspect, the so-called "outer meaning." Tantra refers to three or four levels of meaning of Buddhist teachings: outer, inner, secret,

and, sometimes, "most secret," which refer to increasingly subtle and profound levels of understanding.

Thus, the Medicine Buddha may be understood in different ways. The Medicine Buddha mythos or archetype may also be understood as a psychic *egregore,* to use a term deriving from the Western Esoteric Tradition. An egregore is a complex of psychic energy that is built up because of the concentration and worship of countless numbers of living beings. This is not dissimilar from the Jungian notion of the archetype. Mind is not merely an epiphenomenon of matter but an influential reality in its own right, an idea that we also find in quantum physics interestingly, without regard to questions of historicity. This is the inner meaning of the Medicine Buddha.

The secret meaning of the Medicine Buddha is that the Medicine Buddha is an aspect, vector, mode, or "ray" of the Buddha archetype, the primordial Buddha paradigm that is the commonality of all buddhas, the Buddhahood of "Buddhaness" if you like, which has been called Adi-Buddha, "primordial Buddha," and identified with Samantabhadra, the patron of the Lotus Sutra, and others. The Primordial Buddha is not a historical being at all, but rather the abstract principle of Buddhahood itself. It represents the healing power of the Buddha archetype. This is the secret meaning.

Finally, the most secret meaning of the Medicine Buddha is that it is the Buddha nature itself, and is thus identical with the very True Self of every person, the fundamental nature of which is emptiness (*shunyata*) or non-self-identity (*anatta*) (paradoxically, the True Self is no-self, a statement that is only intelligible from the trans-dual perspective). These different levels of meaning, while not mutually exclusive, progress toward ever-increasing ultimacy. Thus, the historical objection is moot. A similar line of argument applies to the Mahayana itself. The Hinayana is the outer meaning of the dharma. The Mahayana is the inner meaning. The Vajrayana is the secret meaning of the dharma. In addition, the Ekayana is the most secret meaning, a.k.a. the Dharma Transmission to the West, which will only be completely realized with the manifestation of Shambhala.

The "great leaders" consist of gods, dragon kings, nature-spirits (*yakshas* and *gandharvas*), demigods or demons (*asuras*), large humanoid bird-like creatures (*garudas*), centaurs (*kimnaras*), great serpents (*mahoragas*), male and female monastics and lay devotees, and various types of seekers, including disciples, hermits, wisdom beings, and buddhas, subsuming the three paths. The Buddha reiterates that those who hear even one word of the Lotus Sutra, even for a moment, in the presence of the Buddha or even after

his final emancipation will necessarily attain ultimate enlightenment.

The Buddha recommends to the assembly that the Lotus Sutra should be regarded as the Buddha himself and worshipped to be reborn as wisdom beings in the evil human world of suffering. Thus, wisdom beings are able to be reborn where they will as sons and daughters of the Buddha and keepers of the dharma, destined to become buddhas themselves, accomplishing the self-arising and spontaneous intuitive wisdom. Those who disparage the Lotus Sutra or its teachers or teachings will incur great demerit, whereas those who extol the Buddha and the Lotus Sutra will acquire great merit and even greater happiness. The Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares, is the supreme Sutra.

The Buddha says that "this sutra is the mystic, essential treasury of all buddhas, which must not be distributed among or recklessly delivered to men," and the most difficult to believe and understand. Somewhat paradoxically, those who copy, keep, read, recite, worship, and preach the Lotus Sutra to others will be endowed by the Tathagata with his "robe," a presumed reference to the story in the Pali Canon where the Buddha gives his robe to Mahakasyapa to indicate his role as the Buddha's successor as president of the First Buddhist Council. The Tathagata will place his

hand on their heads (in blessing presumably, perhaps also to inspire their minds).

The Buddha recommends erecting a *caitya,* a pagoda in which sutras are deposited, for the Lotus Sutra, based on the doctrine that the Lotus Sutra is identical with the body of the Buddha. He asserts that wisdom beings may be both lay and ordained, male and female, and that those who have heard the Lotus Sutra are walking in the true bodhisattva way and close to attaining enlightenment, because "the Perfect enlightenment of every bodhisattva all belongs to this sutra." The Lotus Sutra reveals the meaning of the skilled method of the Buddha and is the only sutra that reveals the complete and real truth to all aspirants of whatever path and school, including Hinayana, Mahayana, disciples, hermits, and wisdom beings.

The teacher of the Lotus Sutra should develop a great, compassionate, gentle, and patient heart based on the realization of universal voidness or emptiness. The Buddha will send spiritual protectors and shapeshifters to attend to his teaching, and even cause such a teacher and his audience to experience visions of the true Buddha as a pure and luminous being under the right conditions. He will inspire such a teacher with the wisdom to teach the true dharma. This further implies that the Buddha continues to be involved with the world, even though he exists beyond all

worlds. Thus, he is not extinct in the sense of either being non-existent (nihilism) or impersonal (deism).

Chapter XI
The Dharma UFO

"Who causes that sound to go out from the magnificent Stupa of precious substances?"

Suddenly an enormous stupa arises (Hurvitz has "wells up"; Kato has "springs up") out of the earth and appears to hover in the sky. The Sutra gives the dimensions of the stupa as 500 *yojanas* by 250 *yojanas* (roughly 2000 × 1000 miles. Assuming 4.1 miles = 1 *yojana*),[18] this is about two million square miles, somewhat larger than the area of India (1.3 million square miles). Kern translates "stupa" as "meteoric phenomenon," but the UFO association is obvious to us. It reaches as far as the abode of the Four Great Kings, the dimension next above our own earth-plane.

Made of precious metals and adorned with stones, banners, flags, garlands, and jeweled bells, all sorts of beings, including the inhabitants of the realm of the thirty-

[18] Estimates of the length of a *yojana,* the traditional distance travelled by the royal army in a day, vary enormously, but Ashoka says that the distance from Pataliputra (modern Patna) to Babylon (modern Hillah), a distance of 4004 kilometres, is 600 *yojanas.* This gives a value for a *yojana* of 6.7 km (4.1 miles).

three gods, pay homage to and extol the fragrant stupa. The stupa also speaks! The Buddha identifies this stupa with the body of the Tathagata, the *dharmakaya* referred to in the Pali Canon. The whole story strongly suggests the story of the precious dharma wheel that appears in the sky in the Pali Canon and is identified with the sovereignty of the dharma.

The Buddha's *ajna chakra* (the chakra located in the centre of the brain) emits a glow (Kato et al. calls it a "ray signal" or information vector) and in all the directions, wherever the Buddha directs his concentrated attention, buddhas appear in beautiful pure lands and Buddha fields preaching the Lotus Sutra with ravishing voices, innumerable as the sands of the Ganges. These buddhas are all emanations of the primary Buddha archetype, and appear as hidden dimensions of ordinary space-time (*samsara*). All of these buddhas pay homage to Siddhartha Gautama on Vulture Peak and the precious stupa in this world of suffering, which is also transformed into a beautiful pure land.

The assembled buddhas entreat the Buddha to open the stupa, who rises into the air and opens the door of the stupa, which makes a great sound, "with the fingers of his right hand," wherein they all behold the intact body of the Tathagata Abundant Treasures (Many Jewels, Prabhutaratna), identified with the *dharmakaya* or "reality

body" of the Buddha himself, seated in meditation in the ancient, archetypal, cross-legged posture that goes back to Indus Valley civilization (3rd-2nd millennium BCE). The Buddha enters the stupa and also sits in cross-legged posture, whereupon the whole assembly rises into the sky to join them and hear the teachings.

Chapter XII
Devadatta

Chapter XI of the Lotus Sutra, named after the Buddha's wicked cousin and brother in law, Devadatta, is included in chapter XI of the Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan versions of the Sutra. Kumarajiva's version divides chapter XI into two chapters.

The Buddha says that he sought the Lotus Sutra throughout vast ages of time as a righteous king. A hermit, Asita by name, came to him and offered to teach him the Lotus Sutra, whereas the king accepted the hermit as his guru. Asita, the Buddha says, was none other than Devadatta.

Devadatta was a Buddhist monk and the cousin and brother-in-law of the Buddha, and the brother of Ananda. Devadatta was Koliyan. He split from the Buddha's community with five hundred other monks to form their own sangha. Most of these are said to have been Shakyan relatives of both Devadatta and Siddhartha. Devadatta became self-righteous. He began to think that only he and not the Buddha should lead the sangha. Shortly afterward, Devadatta asked the Buddha to retire and let him run the sangha. The Buddha retorted that he would not even let his

trusted disciples Sariputra or Moggallana run the sangha, much less one like Devadatta, "who should be vomited like spittle."

The Buddha warned the monks that Devadatta had changed for the worse. Seeing the danger in this, Devadatta approached Prince Ajatashatru and encouraged him to kill his father, the good King Bimbisara; meanwhile, Devadatta would kill the Buddha. Devadatta then tried to murder the Buddha himself by pushing a rock down on him while the Buddha was walking on the slopes of a mountain. When this failed, he got the elephant Nalagiri drunk and sicked the enraged elephant on the Buddha while the Buddha was on alms round. However, the Buddha's loving-kindness (*metta*) was so great that it overcame the elephant's anger. Devadatta then tried to create a schism in the order.

He collected a few monastic friends and demanded that the Buddha accept the following rules for the monks: *that they should live all their lives in the forest, live entirely on alms obtained by begging, wear only robes made of discarded rags, dwell at the foot of trees, and abstain entirely from fish and flesh.* The Buddha allowed the monastics to follow all of these except the last if they wished. The Buddha refused to make any of these rules compulsory, however, and Devadatta went about saying that the Buddha was living in abundance and luxury – similar to the accusation made by the Group of Five before the Buddha's enlightenment.

Devadatta then created a schism and recited the training rules (*patimokkha*) apart from the Buddha and his followers, with five hundred novices. The Buddha sent his two chief disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, to bring back the erring young monks. Devadatta thought they had come to join his sangha. After asking Sariputra to give a dharma talk, he went to bed. When he awoke, he discovered that the chief disciples had persuaded the young monks to return to the Buddha.[19]

The Buddha predicts that even Devadatta will become a Buddha. Considering Devadatta's antipathy for Siddhartha in this life the identification of Devadatta with the source of the Lotus Sutra and the Buddha's prediction that he will become a Buddha are both remarkable. The story reminds one of the Gnostic Christian books, especially the Gospel of Judas, in which Judas is represented as the positive agent of the salvific principle. The demonic or "satanic" principle is somehow essential for salvation. Thus, in Tantra, evil is transformed by mental power into a force for good. The Lotus Sutra is subtly indicating its identity with an antinomian tendency that we also find in the Gnostics, Sufis, and in William Blake.

[19] Nevertheless, it appears that Devadatta's sangha survived until the 7th century CE. See Reginald Ray, "A Condemned Saint: Devadatta," in *Buddhist Saints in India,* http://www.leighb.com/Devadatta.pdf.

Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, predicts that that the eight-year-old daughter of the Dragon King Samara will become a Buddha, thus discountenancing the misogyny of the Pali Canon and earlier passages of the Lotus Sutra itself. Sariputra, defending the old view, challenges Manjushri's assertion that a woman can become a Buddha. "The body of a woman is filthy and not a vessel of the Law. How can she attain supreme Bodhi?" Presenting a pearl to the Buddha (cf. chapter XIV), the dragon's daughter transforms herself into a male Buddha and realizes instantaneous enlightenment.

Chapter XIII
Enthusiasm

"Light of the world, thou knowest the disposition of all who have flocked hither from every direction, and thou knowest that we speak a word of truth."

The Medicine King Buddha and Great Eloquence vow to keep, read, recite, and preach the Lotus Sutra throughout the evil age to come, i.e., the present epoch, characterized by arrogance and greed. The whole assembly vows to do the same. The Buddha predicts the future enlightenment of his foster mother, Mahapajapati and his wife, Yasodhara.

Chapter XIV
The Happy Way

"Let the Bodhisattva be concentrated in mind, attentive, ever firm as the peak of Mount Sumeru, and in such a state of mind look upon all laws and things as having the nature of space."

Manjushri asks the Buddha how the Lotus Sutra is to be taught. The Buddha replies that he is to live in the place where the wisdom being acts, characterized by four methods:

- The way of the body;
- The way of speech;
- The way of mind; and
- The way of the vow.

The Way of the Body

The way of the body consists of ethical behaviour. One follows the Middle Path between realism or eternalism and nihilism, avoiding discrimination and worldly people and activities, and infatuation with women, as well as *pandakas,* one of the four genders recognized in Buddhism, and teaching dharma without any expectation of reward. The precise English translation of *pandaka* is obscure. Hurvitz translates the word as "unmanly men," though he acknowledges that the literal meaning of the word is

"impotent," referring specifically to inability or disinterest in performing sexually with women. Kato and Kern have "hermaphrodite." PED has "eunuch" or "weakling." Hurvitz states that homosexuals were included in this group.[20] This condition of being impotent with women includes asexuality; full or partial impotence, whether psychological or physical; premature ejaculation; voyeurism; and fellatio. All such persons were prohibited from joining the sangha. The reference to having desire to "rear" or "keep" a young disciple or novice, however, suggests that homoerotic attraction was far from unknown to the celibate all-male sangha. Rather, one should concentrate on the Buddha and meditate in a quiet place.

Further, the wisdom being should regard all phenomena as empty or void, seeing things as they really are, viz., not moving (a cutting edge theory of modern post quantum physics regards the universe as static, the illusion of change being the result of the dynamism of conscious intention or the act of observation), like space, beyond linguistic labelling and therefore trans-rational, illusory, infinite, ubiquitous, and the result of causes (*karma*) and conditions.

The Way of Speech

A wisdom being should be friendly and tolerant, and constructive rather than destructive. In a passage

[20] Op. cit., p. 209 fn.

reminiscent of the Tao Te Ching, the Lotus Sutra says, "it is because one is skilled at cultivating such comfortable thoughts as these that one's listeners shall not oppose one's intentions."

The Way of Mind

The wisdom being teaches the dharma with perfect equanimity, inducing others to hear, observe, recite, teach, copy, and honour the Sutra with others.

The Way of the Vow

Finally, they should manifest *bodhicitta,* the bodhisattva vow whereby one generates the intention to attain Buddhahood and teach the dharma out of compassion for all beings and thus bring all beings to emancipation. The Buddha identifies the Lotus Sutra with a "bright pearl" in the top knot of a "sage-king" (cf. Plato's philosopher kings). The wise king only gives the crown jewel to his chosen ones. The pearl is clearly a symbol of the *sahasrara* chakra at the crown of the head. Similarly, the Lotus Sutra presents the Buddha's highest teaching.

Taoism and Buddhism see the pearl as a symbol of spiritual awareness or enlightenment. The pearl in the centre of the lotus blossom symbolizes the ultimate wisdom in life, and pearls are associated with the dragon energy in Asian folklore. Pearls also represent the full moon, prominent in Buddhist symbolism. In the Avatamsaka

Sutra the metaphor of Indra's net represents reality as a web or network wherein a pearl is tied into every knot in the web. The pearls represent the totality of all possibilities, where each pearl is connected to every other pearl through an infinite web symbolizing the infinite interconnectedness of all phenomena. Moreover, the surface of every pearl is like a mirror, reflecting all other pearls in the web. Jesus, of course, refers in a parable to the pearl of great price that represents the kingdom of heaven.[21] Interestingly, the next parable in the Gospel refers to a net!

The wise king achieves the dharma by means of the combination of meditative concentration and wisdom, teaches the sutras and confers on his followers such precious gifts as meditation, emancipation, "faultless roots and powers" (Hurvitz has "faculties without outflows"), and psychic powers (Kato has "all the wealth of the law"), culminating in nirvana. Implicitly the Lotus Sutra, "the secret treasure house of the tathagatas," is identified with the pearl, representing the highest teaching of the Buddha, through which all beings can achieve perfect wisdom.

[21] Matt. 13:45f.

Chapter XV
The Wisdom Beings Emerge out of the Earth

"I am to utter an infallible word; refrain from disputing about it,
O sages: the science of the Tathagata is beyond reasoning."

In this prelude to chapter XVI (chapter XV of the Sanskrit edition), in which the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra is finally plainly revealed, the assembled wisdom beings enthusiastically offer to teach the Lotus Sutra to others. However, the Buddha spurns their offer, declaring that the so-called "originally converted bodhisattvas" are chosen messengers who alone can teach the Lotus Sutra in the future. These mysterious wisdom beings have been personally taught and trained by the Buddha, and are countless in number.

At that moment, the earth shakes and is split asunder by earthquakes, and out of the great clefts that open up in the ground there appear vast numbers of luminous "bodhisattvas of the earth" that rise up and ascend to the same great aerial stupa that we encountered in chapter XI. This recalls the allusion of the Buddha's earth-touching gesture when he appeals to the deva of the earth in response

to Mara's challenge to prove the fact of his enlightenment. It is also impossible to ignore the UFOlogical implication of this description.

Four wisdom beings lead the bodhisattvas of the earth. They are: Superior Practices (the leader), Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices, which have been interpreted in various ways. The great Japanese reformer, Nichiren (1222–1282), identified with Superior Practices, whose Sanskrit name is Visishtacharitra.

The wisdom beings that rise out of the earth take their seats cross-legged all around the Buddha. The Buddha declares Maitreya to be the next Buddha. The Sanskrit version of the text refers to the Buddha's "manliness."

The Buddha tells the assembly that the wisdom beings that emerge out of the earth inhabit a vast "open space" within the earth (*saha*)-sphere. Here we see a possible archaic origin for the Hollow Earth Theory! This is a universal idea found in mythology, folklore, and legends, including Cabala and Tibetan Buddhism (Agharti). The inner earth is a reputed location of Shambhala. In Greek lore, an ancient god called Zalmoxis inhabited these interior caverns. According to Celtic lore there is a cave in Station Island called Chuachan that leads to the lower realms, also known as St. Patrick's Purgatory. The Tuatha De Danaan, who introduced Druidism to Ireland, also emerged out of the interior earth through a cave in County Down. Other

similar sites include the north side of the Missouri River, whence the Mandan people are said to have originated; Cedar Creek, near the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation; and the Red River above the junction of the Mississippi River. The Cedar Creek caverns were shown to Leclerc Milford, a French military officer and adventurer, by the Creek Indians in 1781, who declared that there was room there for fifteen or twenty thousand families. Hopi tradition refers to a similar cave in the Grand Canyon. The Incas have a tradition of such a cave east of Cuzco, Peru. Many ancient peoples believed that their ancestors came out of the interior of the earth. Many believe that they still exist.

Edmond Halley, after whom Halley 's Comet is named, proposed that the earth is hollow in 1692. Some traditions identify the interior inhabitants as "devilish." The interior earth has more recently been proposed as the source of the UFO phenomenon. Astronomer and computer scientist Dr. Jacques Vallee in particular has suggested that the UFO phenomenon is actually terrestrial in origin. W. Holiday's "goblin universe" idea, popularized by Colin Wilson, may also be included here.[22] If one looks at the imaginative

[22] See Adam Rourke, "The Goblin Universe: Speculations on the Nature of Reality," 2009, http://assets.booklocker.com/pdfs/4263s.pdf, and Ted Holiday and Colin Wilson, *The Goblin Universe,* 2nd ed. (London: Xanada Publications, 1990).

interpretation of the hollow earth hypothesis in fiction, it seems to be associated with inversion, archaism, high technology, secret knowledge, spirituality, alien life, and utopianism. The hollow earth meme may be a psychological projection of a reality that has a larger, more profound interpretation than the physical theory.

We need not take these mythologems literally to take them seriously. It is easy to see in "the midst of the open space of this sphere" modern scientific conceptions of multi-dimensionality, in which various numbers and types of dimensions beyond the ordinary four dimensions are concealed within our experience of materiality, as well as multi-universes that may coexist but be invisible and intangible to us. The Jungian in me cannot help but notice too that these *higher* beings are also *interior* beings! That modern science is openly speculating about such things is remarkable confirmation of the primordial wisdom of our ancient ancestors whose worldview is so similar to ours even after thousands of years of aberration that persists in the incredibly shallow and naïve view of reality that pervades religion, politics, industry, and even science today (so-called "scientism"). The perennial philosophy is both protean and perdurable.

The incredulous assembly, deluded by historicism, objects that the Buddha has only been enlightened for forty years, putting the age at which he taught the Lotus Sutra at 75,

five years before his passing on. How, therefore, can he have trained so many wisdom beings? They beg the Buddha to explain so they do not doubt. This is the moment of consciousness expansion that everyone has been waiting for, and the prelude to the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, which we will discuss in the next chapter.

Recap

The Lotus Sutra opens with the Buddha seated in meditation on Vulture Peak before a vast assembly of all different sorts of beings, including male and female monastics and householders, gods, dragons, spirits, demigods, anti-gods, mythical birds, centaurs, great snakes, humans and non-humans, and kings. The world of the Lotus Sutra is clearly a visionary world, a world of the imagination, a world of the mind, and not the common historical world that we know as the earth-plane. It is, however, emphatically not an "unreal" world.

The Buddha displays wondrous and supernatural signs, including a beam of energy that emanates from his forehead. Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, tells Maitreya, the Next Buddha, that these are signs that the Buddha intends to preach the Great Dharma, specifically the Lotus Sutra, based on historical precedents. Similarly, the Pali Canon says that luminous signs precede the appearance of Brahma.

The Buddha reveals to Sariputra, the disciple foremost in wisdom, that the ultimate meaning of the dharma is hard to understand. Thus, he teaches disciples according to their faculties, adapted to their limited abilities and understanding; only a Buddha can comprehend the ultimate

meaning of the teachings, which is beyond rational comprehension and linguistic expression. Despite the great variety of teachings, the Buddha says there is only One Single Buddha Vehicle, which manifests in many different forms, including the three vehicles of the disciples, hermits, and wisdom beings. Sariputra begs the Buddha to teach this ultimately explanatory dharma, but the Buddha hesitates, declaring that it would fill gods and men with fear, and that arrogant monastics might fall into a great void because of it. Sariputra persists, and the Buddha finally relents, agreeing to teach the Great Dharma.

Immediately five thousand proud and arrogant monastic and lay disciples walk out of the assembly, thus purifying the assembly and making it a suitable receptacle for the ultimate revelation of the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha says that a teaching such as this, which is an ancient and indeed primordial teaching, is only revealed once every three thousand years, which is the mythological frequency of the flowering of the cluster fig blossom (Ficus glomerata, Skt. *udumbara*) to which he refers. Known as the "blue lotus," the *udumbara* plant is used in Ayurvedic medicine as an aphrodisiac and to reduce fever, amongst other uses. 3400 BCE is near the midpoint of Indus Valley Civilization (4000–2000 BCE), the original Indian civilization, as well as being close to the advent of the Kali Yuga in 3102 BCE, corresponding to the advent of urban civilization. Three

thousand years after 3102 BCE is 102 BCE, corresponding to the appearance of the Prajnaparamita and the first appearance of the Lotus Sutra itself.

The Buddha declares that innumerable buddhas pervade the universe, all teaching the same ultimate truth in many different forms, varying according to their conditions, yet all tending toward the complete and final enlightenment of Buddhahood. He further declares the future Buddhahood of all those in the assembly, declaring their future names, realms, ages, and longevities.

The Buddha then hints at the supreme teaching of the Lotus Sutra by means of a series of seven parables, including the Burning House, the Lost Heir, the Plants, the Phantom City, the Concealed Gem, the Crest Jewel, and the Physician's Sons (chapters III, IV, V, VII, VIII, XIV, and XVI respectively). He declares the Lotus Sutra to be the supreme sutra, productive of great merit for those who hear, read, understand, keep, copy, or teach the Sutra. Nirvana is not the goal of enlightenment, but merely the culmination of the first stage of the path, the stage of discipleship, on the way to enlightenment. Through nirvana, the adept extinguishes the imperfections and is emancipated from the mirage of samsara. They see phenomena as they really are in themselves, without distortion, and are thus freed from involuntary rebirth.

A stupa pyramid rises out of a void inside the earth, breaks through the ground, causes earthquakes, and hovers in the air above the assembly, followed by innumerable numbers of luminous wisdom beings. They also come out of the earth and fly up to the stupa, where they join the Buddha and the gathered assembly inside what is clearly an enormous aerial object.

Chapter XVI
The Immortality of the Tathagata

"There I rule myself as well as all beings, I. But men of perverted minds, in their delusion, do not see me standing there."

The Buddha declares he will speak, and the assembly, led by Maitreya, begs him to do so. The Buddha declares the Buddha archetype or paradigm, the same Buddhahood that is actually ancient and timeless, attained throughout endless samsara by all buddhas. Buddhas manifest wherever and however necessary to further the spiritual development of those to whom they appear, yet within and beyond them all is the original and originating Buddhahood itself that appears to those to whom it appears in accordance with their conditions and their capacity. Since samsara is endless, so too is this Buddhahood. Therefore, it is primordial and has appeared and reappeared throughout all history and all time and space.

Western academicians with a historicist bent regard this idea as a sort of theism and see the Lotus Sutra as a kind of Buddhist reversion to theism, possibly even influenced by

Christianity (but the opposite has also been argued). However, we do not need to look to Christianity to understand the influences of the Lotus Sutra. Far more likely is the doctrine of the *Tathagatagarbha,* "the true entity that is without outflows," the Buddha "womb" or "embryo" that represents the innate potentiality of every living sentient being for attaining Buddhahood. In the Pali Canon, it is described by the Buddha as "innately pure luminous mind" (Anguttara Nikaya). In the Mahayana tradition, it appears in the Nirvana Sutra (100–220 CE) and implicitly in the Lotus Sutra. **This is the preeminent "secret teaching" of the Lotus Sutra that is credited with the potential to catalyze enlightenment itself.**

The Buddha is clear that nirvana does not mean that the Tathagata is literally extinguished – he condemned nihilism – but that one is emancipated from all conditions, including involuntary rebirth, in an immortal (i.e., timeless) state. One sees things as they are, from a trans-dual perspective, in which samsara itself appears illusory, neither existent nor nonexistent. This is directly contrary to the Hinayana, which hypostasized phenomena as inherently suffering, transient, and non-self-identical beings. This dualistic hypostatization of illusion and enlightenment creates an insuperable barrier to realization, similar in fact to the self-negating teachings of the Jains. The dyad can only realize enlightenment through its own annihilation.

The Buddha tells the parable of the Good Doctor. In his absence, his sons drink toxic medicines and some lose their minds. The doctor gives the sons who still have their senses a herbal medicine that restores them to health and sanity, but the mad sons refuse to take the medicine, declaring that it is no good. Such is the state of the world. Therefore, the doctor plans a ruse. He leaves the medicine with the sons and then sends back a messenger to tell them that he has died. Hearing this, they become so remorseful that they take the medicine and are cured. The sons who take the medicine are the wisdom beings, and they are cured of the suffering of existence by "waking up" to its non-reality, whereas those sons who cling to their suffering are the adepts, who refuse to realize that the First Noble Truth is belied by the fact of enlightenment, and thus is itself transient (everything true of samsara must be transient by definition). However, in the end all realize the truth of the bodhisattva path and the transience of suffering and indeed the transience of transience itself, thus realizing the Great Dharma.

In all this it should also be realized that samsara is not merely toxic, it is also medicinal, the poison of desire also the method of emancipation (cf. Chapter V). What can kill us can also cure us. This establishes the premise for the way of transformation of the Inner (or Internal) Tantra.

Chapter XVII
Efficacious Merit

"That spot of earth has been enjoyed by myself; there have I walked myself, and there have I been sitting; where that son of Buddha has stayed, there I am."

The Buddha declares to Maitreya that an incalculable number of beings (i.e., the number of grains of sand in 680 millions of *nayutas* of Ganges rivers, a *nayuta* being 100 billion) accepted the doctrine of the unborn dharma because of the revelation of the previous chapter.[23]

An even greater number of wisdom beings were able to "take hold" of the "gateway of the dharanis," or mantras,

[23] However, we know from Kern that the cyphers can be ignored (*Suddharma-Pundarika,* p. 149, n. 3; etc.). This number, 680, is extremely interesting. It is the cube of 2 × 5 × 17, and is a tetradedral, or triangular pyramidal, number. It represents a pyramid with a triangular base and three sides (cf. chapter XI). The tetrahedron is the fundamental structural unit of existence according to R. Buckminster Fuller, an idea revived in the unified quantum theory of reality of the Quantum Gravity Research (QGR) group, a scientific think tank founded by Klee Irwin (whether Irwin knows that he has revived Fuller's theorem I do not know). The Sutra's emphasis on "open space" is interesting in this context. Interestingly, 68 is also a "happy number," which means that repeatedly adding up the sum of the squares of its digits leads eventually to unity.

including a universally efficacious mantra (a panacea, in fact), and operate the wheel of dharma.[24] Many of these will attain enlightenment. After the Buddha spoke space was filled with a rain of flowers, sandalwood and other incenses, fine garments, and the sound of drums was heard.

The Buddha declares that the merit of believing in or even just understanding the revelation of the Lotus Sutra is beyond calculation, far greater than the cultivation of the five perfections (non-ego, self-restraint, non-differentiation, energy, and mental concentration), but specifically not the perfection of wisdom, once again emphasizing the special role of wisdom in relation to the other perfections that I have emphasized throughout. The perfection of wisdom is especially efficacious if it is received through a continuous face-to-face transmission. The Buddha reiterates that the merit of one who hears, promulgates, holds, writes down, or worships the Sutra is incalculable and their purified senses will perceive the earth-plane as a pure land. Hurvitz says

[24] Kern has "obtained the dharani that makes a hundred thousand kotis [ten million] of revolutions" (ibid, p. 311). Kato notes that "the door, or method, of the hearing and keeping of *dharani*" refers to the first of four "fearlessnesses" of a wisdom being, fearlessness in proclaiming all truth. The other three are proclaiming the truth of perfection, exposing obstacles to the truth, and proclaiming the way to end all suffering. Kato further notes, "the dharani of numberless revolutions or evolutions is the power to discriminate manifold phenomena without error. By this discrimination a bodhisattva destroys all his perplexities and exhibits many Buddha-laws" (*Threefold Lotus Sutra*, p. 257f. and nn. 1 and 2).

that such a one holds the Tathagata in his head. Kern has "carries on his shoulder." Similarly, the vodouisant carries the loa on their head! They will quickly come to the Knowledge of All Modes (Kato has "perfect knowledge"). Another term is "omniscience."

Chapter XVIII
The Exposition of Meritorious Joy

"All existences are like a mirage; hasten to become disgusted with all existence."

Maitreya asks the Buddha how much joy a man or a woman who celebrates the Lotus Sutra will experience as a result. The Buddha says that if such a person preaches the Lotus Sutra such that fifty people also celebrate it, the joy that they all experience, even to the fiftieth person, will be incalculable. Moreover, anyone who accepts the Lotus Sutra will be reborn in a healthy and handsome body with great benefits, including rebirth in higher worlds, where they will inhabit aerial vehicles (*vimanas*).[25]

The Lotus Sutra further describes the Buddha in phrases similar to the Pali Canon's "thirty-two and eighty marks of a great man," including having a beautiful mouth, tongue, and teeth; a long, high and straight nose; round and full

[25] Hurvitz notes the alternative translation, "palaces," but opines that vehicles is what is meant.

face; high and long eyebrows; broad, even, and upright forehead; and, interestingly, a perfect penis!

Chapter XIX
In Praise of True Teachers

"He knows the connections and knots; he discerns in all laws contrarieties; he knows the meaning and the interpretations, and expounds them according to his knowledge."

The Buddha declares that anyone who accepts and keeps the Lotus Sutra will purify their sense organs, including their body and mind, such that they see everything in the "thousand-millionfold" world, both hidden and exposed, from the lowest hell to the Pinnacle or Summit of Existence. The Pinnacle of Existence is equivalent to the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception of the formless realm in the Buddhist cosmology. All living beings and their various karmic causes and conditions are included, without attachment, even if they have not acquired the Divine Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Body, or Mind.

The various sensations that are described in the Sutra are typical of advanced yoga practice or psychedelic experience. The references to Light Sound and Universal Purity may be equivalent to the Devas of Radiant Glory and Streaming Radiance. Other cosmological references are familiar, including the Avici hell, Mount Meru (Sumeru) and its

Iron Circle, the oceans within the iron rim, and the Brahma world. The qualification "without and within" suggests a recognition that these worlds are both objective and subjective, similar to Jung's concept of the psychoid. Similarly, the "palaces" of the gods, who are interestingly both male and female, also refer to "aerial vehicles" or UFOs. Kato et al. refer to Light Sound as the second realm of meditation heavens, and Universal Purity as the third realm.

The purification of consciousness results in its progressive refinement, such that one's nervous sensibility can be vastly expanded. I have heard, for example, of a Canadian shaman who could hear the sound of a tree falling in the forest in the wilderness where they lived. The Pali Canon refers to a mental body that is generated by the practice of the *jhanas.* Here we learn that those who keep the Lotus Sutra "will obtain a pure body like pure crystal which all the living delight to see," and they will experience the totality of the macrocosm in their body. Similarly, in Tibetan Buddhism we find the doctrine of the body of light or rainbow body.

With respect to the mind, the Buddha says that "with this pure mental faculty by hearing so much as a single *gatha* or a single phrase, he shall penetrate incalculable, limitless meanings; and after having understood these meanings he shall be able to expound a single phrase or a single *gatha* for as much as a month, or four months, or

even for a year and the dharmas that he preaches shall be in accord with the import of that meaning, standing in absolutely no contradiction to the marks of reality." Thus, the verses of the Sutra have "finite and boundless meanings" that can be discerned by the enlightened mind. Similarly, the number of buddhas in the universe is infinite.

Chapter XX
Sadaparibhuta

"It is because I have kept, read, preached this Dharmaparyaya [dharma teaching], derived from the teaching of the ancient Tathagatas … that I have so soon arrived at supreme, perfect enlightenment."

The Buddha adds that in addition to the merits obtained by one who keeps the Lotus Sutra, contrarily, one who abuses or maligns them will experience great demerit. The Buddha implies that through the realization of the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths one attains the grade of disciple, characterized by the experience of nirvana (thus nirvana corresponds to success in the lowest grade of spiritual development); through the realization of the doctrine of Interdependent Origination one attains the grade of hermit; and through the realization of the doctrine of the Six Perfections one attains the grade of wisdom being, characterized by the experience of enlightenment and the wisdom of Buddhahood itself. The bodhisattva path subsumes all lower paths. The purification of the six sense faculties also extends one's life span.

Each Buddha appears at the nadir of human civilization, and inaugurates an age divided into two complementary

phases, the Righteous Law and the Counterfeit Law. The second half of the age, called the age of diminution, is characterized by increasing famine, pestilence, and war. This period is also characterized by evil laws, the absence of moral restraint, false doctrines, and short and brutish lives, and clearly corresponds to the age in which we now live. This view of samsaric history is cyclical, as in the Pali Canon.

Chapter XXI
The Power of the Tathagata

"He who keeps this Sutra, the veritable law, will fathom the mystery of the highest man; will soon comprehend what truth it was that was arrived at on the terrace of enlightenment."

The wisdom beings of the earth, who emerged out of the earth in chapter XV and are now seated around the Buddha in the stupa UFO, "equal in number to the atoms in the thousandfold world,"[26] declare their intention to teach the Lotus Sutra so as to attain the Great Dharma, whereupon the Buddha and the whole assembly extend their tongues and emit innumerable rays of coloured light, reaching to the limits of the multiverse. After a long time they spit and snap their fingers, causing the earth to tremble and shake. Turning toward the earth, they all join their palms and chant, "*Namaḥ Sakyamunibuddaya,*" that is, "Homage to the Shakyan sage, the Buddha." This is according to the Chinese text. The Sanskrit text gives a

[26] About ten quadrillion vigintillion and one-hundred thousand quadrillion vigintillion atoms (10^{78} to 10^{82}), according to modern scientific reckoning.

longer mantra, "*Namo bhagavate Sakyamunaye tathagatayarhate samyaksambuddhayeti vacam bhasante sma.*" They scatter vast numbers of offerings including floral scents, necklaces, banners, parasols, etc. across the earth plane. Interestingly, the earth is always referred to as a "plane," and in post-quantum physics, it has been discovered that the topography of space is actually two dimensional, not three dimensional as it appears. This has led to the serious speculation that the universe is a hologram!

The Buddha declares the merit and spiritual powers resulting from the concentration of the Tathagata to be infinite, and refers to the Lotus Sutra as a treasure house containing all the secrets of the Tathagatas. He says that all buddhas are "emanations" of the primordial Buddha archetype or paradigm that is both "without and within."

Chapter XXII
The Essential Gift[27]

"I transfer and transmit, entrust and deposit this supreme and perfect enlightenment arrived at by me after hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of incalculable Aeons."

This chapter appears at the end of the Sanskrit edition of the Lotus Sutra, corresponding to chapter XXVII. However, Kumarajiva placed it here. Bunno Kato et al. argue in favour of Kumarjiva's change.

Shakyamuni Buddha rises from his seat and in a gesture of benediction touches the heads of the wisdom beings with his right hand three times and entrusts the self-evident dharma of enlightenment to the wisdom beings, whereupon the wisdom beings experience an intense *bodily* ecstasy. The emphasis on the body recalls Buddhaghosa's statement that the meditation on the body is a unique revelation found

[27] This is chapter XXVII of the Sanskrit (Kern) edition of the Lotus Sutra, entitled *Anuparīndanāparivartaḥ* (*anu* + *parindana* + *parivartaḥ*). Skt. *anu* = "fine, minute, atomic"; *parindana* = "gratification, present." The Chinese title is 嘱累品 – "enjoin, implore, urge" + "bind together, twist around; accumulate, involve, implicate; tired, weary, strain, work hard." Kern gives it the title *dharmaparyaya,* "turning the dharma," i.e., inaugurating the cycle.

only in the *Buddhadharma.*[28] The Sutra declares that the buddhas in the assembly are emanations of his true body, the *dharmakaya,* the body of reality itself.

[28] See Sarah Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from the Pali Canon* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), p. 142.

Chapter XXIII
The History of Medicine King[29]

"It is like a tank for the thirsty, like a fire for those who suffer from cold, like a garment for the naked, like the caravan leader for the merchants, like a mother for her children, like a boat for those who ferry over, like a leech for the sick, like a lamp for those who are wrapt in darkness, like a jewel for those who want wealth, like the ocean for the rivers, like a torch for the dispelling of darkness."

The bodhisattva Naksatrarajasamkusumitabhijna ("One Whose Superknowledges have Been Beflowered by the Kings of the Constellations") asks the Buddha to recount the history of Medicine King. Medicine King is an important Mahayana bodhisattva who first appears in Chapter X, to whom the Buddha reveals that all those who hear even a single verse or phrase of the

[29] The Sanskrit title is *Bhaiṣajyarājapūrvayoga,* from *bhaisajya,* "medicine, drug" + *raja,* "king, chief" + *purvayoga,* "history, olden time." The Chinese title is 藥王菩薩本事品 "medicine" + "king" + "bodhisattva" + "origin, source; foundation, basis" + "chapter."

Lotus Sutra will achieve supreme and perfect enlightenment in accordance with the Law of Karma.

In response, the Buddha tells the story of the Tathagata Buddha Candrasuryavimalprabhasri ("Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon"), who taught the Lotus Sutra to the bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarsana ("Seen with Joy by All Living Beings"). "Seen with Joy by All Living Beings" attained the *samadhi* that "displays all manner of physical bodies," and made offerings to the Buddha, including the sacrifice of his own body. Because of this sacrifice, "Seen with Joy by All Living Beings" is spontaneously reborn in the pure realm or Buddha field of "Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon" in the house of King Vimaladatta ("Pure Virtue") seated in the cross-legged posture, whereupon he flies up approximately 210 meters (686 feet) into the presence of the Buddha "Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon" seated on a "platform."[30] The Buddha tells "Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon" that tonight the Buddha will experience his passing on (*parinirvana*). The Buddha entrusts the dharma to "Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon," and directs him to build stupas for whatever relics remain, whereupon he passes on in the last watch of the night (approximately 2 or 3am to 6am, about the same time that

[30] The Sanskrit word is *bodhimanda*, "seat of wisdom." *Manda* is the root of *mandala*, referring to a celestial orb.

Shakyamuni Buddha is supposed to have attained enlightenment). "Pure and Bright Excellence of Sun and Moon" cremates the Buddha and, overcome by grief, he burns his forearms, which are miraculously restored by an Act of Truth. We are familiar with the Power of Truth from the Pali Canon, which the Lotus Sutra explains as an oath that is real and not vain. In the Indian tradition, such vows or oaths, like mantras, are considered intrinsically efficacious and powerful.

The Buddha tells "One Whose Superknowledges have Been Beflowered by the Kings of the Constellations" that "Seen with Joy by All Living Beings" was the bodhisattva now known to the assembly as Medicine King, who sacrificed his body, which surpasses all other offerings, to the dharma billions of times in past lives. Just as self-sacrifice is the supreme virtue, so is the Lotus Sutra the supreme and most profound sutra, like Mount Sumeru, the axis of the world; the sun; the moon; or the sage king, destroying all obscurities and imperfections. In particular, it is the sutra of the bodhisattva path, with the power to save all living beings.

> Like a clear, cool pond, it can slake the thirst of all. As a chilled person finds fire, as a naked person finds clothing, as a merchant finds a chief, as a child finds its mother, as a passenger finds a ship, as a sick person finds a physician, as darkness finds a torch, as a poor person finds a jewel, as the

> people find a king, as a commercial traveller finds the sea, as a candle dispels darkness, this scripture of the Dharma Blossom also, in the same way, can enable beings to separate themselves from all woes, from all sickness and pain, and can loose all the bonds of birth and death.[31]

The merit of hearing, writing, or worshipping it is limitless. The same is said of the present chapter of the Lotus Sutra. A woman hearing this chapter of the Medicine King will never again be reborn in an inferior body. If she practises it, she will be reborn in the Western paradise called Sukhavati (lit. "full of joy, blissful"), the pure land of Amitabha, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and Light. They will gain the supernatural insights of a bodhisattva, especially the understanding of the principle of unborn dharmas (Kato et al. have "will attain transcendent powers and the assurance of no rebirth").[32] This will be true of the final five-hundred-year period called the Decay of the Law, characterized by the demise of the True Dharma, strife, and division. According to the Mahasamnipata Sutra (circa 414 CE) this period will begin two thousand years after the Passing On, or 1600 CE according to the best modern

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[31] Cf. *The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster:* "The girders of the soul, which give her breathing, are easy to be unloosed" (Psel. 32 – Plet. 8).

[32] *Threefold Lotus Sutra,* p. 310. Kern has "he will also receive the five transcendent faculties, as well as the acquiescence in the eternal law" (*Saddharma-Pundarika,* p. 390).

reckoning, ending in 2100 CE.[33] The 17th century corresponds to the Scientific Revolution, referred to in the Pali Canon as the *sattantarakappa* ("sword interval" or "age of science"), the General Crisis, and the intensification of the European conquest of the Americas that has led to the existential crisis of the 21st century, which may actually end human civilization if it is not resolved soon. I have discussed this prophecy in my book, *Conversations with the Buddha.*

A person hearing this chapter will attain the Divine Eye whereby they will see buddhas, much as the great English bodhisattva William Blake saw infinity in the palm of his hand and eternity in an hour.[34] The new age is the age of Set, Saturn, Satan, or science (*sattha*), i.e., natural religion, or rationalist deism, which delivers us from death through death. Swedenborg was of course born in 1688.

Before we all go out and immolate ourselves, however, I would like to remind the reader of the essential hermeneutic of the Lotus Sutra that the verses of the Lotus Sutra conceal

[33] The major alternative date of 483 BCE would put the 2500th year of the Parinirvana circa 2017 CE. The traditional Theravadin date of 544 BCE, which would put the year 2500 BE circa 1956/57, corresponding to the Sixth Buddhist Council, is untenable.

[34] "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour." "Auguries of Innocence," in the Pickering Manuscript (1803).

infinite secret meanings (see Chap. XIX).[35] That is to say, *the Lotus Sutra is an esoteric sutra that is not to be understood literally.* Similarly, Jesus advises his followers to cut off your hand or your foot or rip out your eye rather than to wind up in the unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43ff., ASV; cf. Matt. 9:29f.). There is a similar allusion to self-immolation in the Pali Canon, but like most sane people, I would not recommend interpreting this advice literally. The Pali Canon contains explicit warnings against committing suicide in the pursuit of salvation. The Buddha, of course, forbade the taking of life in the Five Precepts and in the Vinaya. The true meaning of this doctrine is to be found in the literal meaning of the word, *vahnipatana,* in relation to *sramana.* Further elucidation goes beyond the scope of this treatise, but here we discover the true secret of the Lotus Sutra.

[35] "With this pure mental faculty, by hearing so much as a single gatha or a single phrase, he shall penetrate incalculable, limitless meanings; and after having understood these meanings, he shall be able to expound a single phrase or a single gatha for as much as a month, or four months, or even for a year, and the dharmas that he preaches shall be in accord with the import of that meaning, standing in absolutely no contradiction to the marks of reality" (Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma,* p. 276).

Chapter XXIV
Gadgadasvara[36]

"Even to the creatures in the gynaeceums of this Saha-world has the Bodhisattva Mahasattvas Gadgadasvara, after metamorphosing himself into a woman, preached this Dharmaparyaya of the Lotus of the True Law."

The protuberance on top of Shakyamuni Buddha's head begins to glow, and a ray originating from his forehead illuminates the eastern quarter, revealing innumerable numbers of spherical worlds, including the pure land of the Buddha whose name, Kamaladalvimalanaksatrarajasamkusumitabhijna, means the "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower." This realm includes the bodhisattva Gadgadasvara. The Lotus Sutra names multiple *samadhis* ("meditations") achieved by Gadgadasvara, including:

- "Fine standard";
- "Dharma Blossom";

[36] The Sanskrit title of this chapter is *Gadgadasvara,* the name of a bodhisattva, meaning "stammering utterance." The Chinese title is **妙音菩薩品**, "clever, wonderful" + "sound, noise, note, tone, news, syllable" + "bodhisattva" + "chapter." Therefore, the full translation might be "The Chapter of the Bodhisattva Subtle Sound."

- "Pure Excellent";
- "Sport of the king of constellations";
- "No objects";
- "Seal of knowledge";
- "Enables one to understand the speech of all living beings";
- "Collects all merits";
- "Pure";
- "Play of magical powers";
- "Lamp of knowledge";
- "King of adornment";
- "Pure glow";
- "Pure womb";
- "Unshared";
- "Turns to the sun."

Gadgadasvara declares that he will go to the earth plane to worship Shakyamuni Buddha and visit the bodhisattvas there. "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" warns Gadgadasvara not to disparage the earth plane, though he admits that it is filthy, because even there perfect buddhas and bodhisattvas may be found. By the power of his samadhi "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" causes a rain of lotus flowers to appear on Vulture Peak. Manjushri begs Shakyamuni Buddha to tell them what samadhi

"Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" has attained, so that they too might practise it and can see his marks. "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" travels through several realms in order to reach Vulture Peak along with his entourage of bodhisattvas in a tower-like aerial vehicle called "seven-jewelled terrace" and ascended to a height of 210 meters (686 feet). Descending from his aerial vehicle, he approaches the Buddha, presents him with a jeweled necklace (mala?), and asks to see the body of Prabhutaratna, the *dharmakaya* of the Buddha in the aerial stupa from chapter XI.

Padmasri ("Floral Excellence") wants to know how "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" developed these *siddhis.* Shakyamuni tells Padmasri that "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" performed many meritorious deeds over many lifetimes, in numerous different bodies and roles, including devas and humans, even including women, as well as worshipping the Buddha "King of the Sound of Thunder in the Clouds." He also teaches the Lotus Sutra. Indeed, he can assume whatever form is necessary to save beings.

Finally, the Buddha tells Padmasri that "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" dwells in the *samadhi* called "manifestation of the

body of all forms." This *samadhi* is also associated with a *dharani* or mantra (which is not given). Gadgadasvara then returns to his own pure land and tells "Knowledge Conferred by the King of Constellations named Pure Flower" everything that has occurred.

Chapter XXV
The Chapter of the Multi-Face(t)ed One

"Pure one, whose shine is spotless bright, whose knowledge is free from darkness, thou shining as the sun, not to be beaten away, radiant as the blaze of fire thou spreadest in thy flying course thy lustre in the world."

The bodhisattva Aksayamati ("Inexhaustible Mind") rises and asks the Buddha why Avalokitesvara (lit. "the lord who looks down on the cries of the world") is called "Observer of the Sounds of the World." The Buddha declares that those who call upon the name of Avalokitesvara will gain deliverance from suffering, pain, and torment because of the great merit of the bodhisattva. Like the doctrine of the *Tathagatagharba,* this is another "secret doctrine" of the Lotus Sutra, in which Avalokitesvara is mentioned for the first time. Nevertheless, Avalokitesvara is also revered in Theravadin countries, where he is referred to as Natha-deva (Sri Lanka), Lokanat (Myanmar), and Lokesvara (Thailand). Although he is sometimes identified with the Future Buddha, Maitreya, this identification is erroneous. The Buddha's hyperboles recall Jesus' statement that those who have faith could move

mountains, thus begging the question of what is actually meant. An interesting detail is the reference to ghosts, who apparently afflict others with an "evil eye" (Kato et al. have "wicked eyes"; Kern has "wicked designs"). As with Jesus' pronouncement about faith, the sticking point in the Buddha's statement is that one must have "single-minded concentration." I have referred to the theory of the *egregore,* whereby the concentration of millions of prayers directed to a common symbolic focus results in an accumulation of merit ("psychic energy") associated with that *egregore* that can be "tapped into" similarly to the principle of the Transfer of Merit. This belief in the Transfer of Merit, also referred to in the Pali Canon, is the basis of the Mahayana path of the bodhisattva. Thus, the Buddha says, "For this reason the beings should ever bear him in mind." Avalokitesvara may also be seen as a symbolic representation of the compassion of all buddhas, as Samantabhadra or Adi-Buddha is a symbolic representation of the universal quality of Buddhahood, and thus ultimately efficacious. From this perspective, the historicity of Avalokitesvara as a bodhisattva is moot.

The Buddha says that Avalokitesvara will appear to suffering beings in whatever forms are necessary for their emancipation, whether a buddha, *pratyekabuddha,* disciple, king, elder, householder, official, brahman, male or female monastic or lay follower, woman, male or female child,

deva, asura, any other human or nonhuman being, or nature spirit. Thus, he appears continuously throughout the world in innumerable forms, conveying the gift of fearlessness.

Chapter XXVI
Protective Verses

"The law that has no origin."

The bodhisattva Medicine King rises and asks Shakyamuni Buddha how much happiness can be obtained because of receiving, keeping, reading, reciting, or copying the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha replies that anyone who reads, recites, understands, and practises as little as a single short verse of the Lotus Sutra will experience happiness greater than that of someone who makes an astronomical number of offerings to the buddhas.

Medicine King then gives a mantra to the preachers of dharma for their protection. Hurvitz notes that most of these mantras use feminine singular vocative verb forms. Kern remarks: "I take these to be epithets of the Great Mother, Nature or Earth, differently called Aditi, Prajna, Maya, Bhavani, Durga." They are largely untranslatable. The female principle appears in the Pali Canon as the deva of the earth, to whom the Buddha appeals in his famous "earth-touching gesture" in response to Mara's demand that he produce a witness to the fact of his enlightenment. Similarly, Laozi emphasizes the salvific importance of the female principle. In the Bible we have Sophia and Mary.

Brave Donor, Vaisravana, Realm Holder, and ten demon (*rakshasa*) daughters also recite their own protective mantras for the benefit of the preachers of dharma. As a result, 68,000 accept the doctrine of the unborn dharmas ("the assurance of no rebirth" according to Kato et al.; Kern has "the law that has no origin").

Chapter XXVII
The History of King Subhavyuha

"We will no more be slaves to our own mind."

The Buddha tells the assembly about Subhavyuha, King Fine Adornment, who lived incalculable ages ago, in the realm and age of a buddha called Wisdom Adorned with Flowers. This king had two sons, well-practised in the perfections of a bodhisattva, as well as the following samadhis:

- "Sun, stars, and constellations";
- "Pure ray";
- "Pure colour";
- "Pure sparkle";
- "Eternal adornment (lovely in adornment)";
- "Womb of great, imposing excellence (womb/embryo of great glow)";
- "Dharma blossom."

Fine Adornments was a follower of Brahmanism, but his wife and their two sons were attracted to the teachings of the Buddha, and the sons sought to hear the Buddha preach

the Lotus Sutra. Persuading their father by a magical display, strongly reminiscent of the UFO phenomenon,[37] the sons seek their mother's permission to become monastics in order to follow the Buddha, which she gives, because buddhas are as hard to find "as it would be for a one-eyed tortoise to encounter a hole in a floating piece of wood."[38] Whereupon the whole family, including a large retinue from the king's palace, go to where the Buddha Wisdom Adorned with Flowers is. They scatter pearls over him, and experience a vision of the buddhas, luminous, made of subtle matter, seated on a couch on a terrace with four pillars. The Buddha in his turn predicts the future Buddhahood of King Fine Adornment. The king confers his realm on his younger brother and he, his wife, sons, and retinue all become monastics. After a very long time of practising the Lotus Sutra, the king attains the samadhi

[37] "The two sons, taking thought for their father, danced in empty space at a height equal to that of seven tala-trees and displayed a variety of magical feats in empty space: walking, remaining still, sitting, lying down, emitting water from the upper part of their bodies, emitting fire from the lower part of their bodies, emitting water from the lower part of their bodies, emitting fire from the upper part of their bodies, or else displaying a body large enough to fill empty space, then displaying a small one, or a small one and then displaying a large one, vanishing in empty space and then suddenly appearing on the ground, sinking into the earth as if it were water, treading on the water as if it were earth."

[38] Cf. SN 56.48. Kern et at. all identify this as chapter XV of the Samyutta Nikaya (p. 335 n. 4).

called "adornment of all pure merit" and ascends into empty space to a height of 210 meters (686 feet).

The Buddha preaches the merits of spiritual friendship to the king. The king describes the Buddha in an interesting passage, including a reference to his eyes, which are long, broad, and blue. After praising the Buddha, the king departs.

Now the Buddha addresses the assembly and informs them that the bodhisattva Floral Excellence is none other than King Fine Adornment. His wife the lady Pure Virtue is the bodhisattva Marks of Adornment. The sons are Medicine King and Above Medicine.

Chapter XXVIII
The Inspiration of Samantabhadra

"Those creatures who shall write and keep this Sutra, O Lord … will belong to those who have planted good roots under many Buddhas, O Lord, and whose heads are caressed by the hands of the Tathagata."

The Lotus Sutra ends with Samantabhadra, the bodhisattva identified with the Adi or Primordial Buddha, coming out of the east, the direction of the rising sun, along with a vast retinue of human and nonhuman beings. Arriving at Vulture Peak, he bows to Shakyamuni Buddha and circles him seven times, clockwise. Telling the Buddha he has come to hear the Lotus Sutra, he asks the Buddha how the people will "attain" the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha passes on. The Buddha tells Samantabhadra that such a person may attain the Lotus Sutra if they fulfil four conditions:

1. They must be the object of the protective mindful thoughts of the buddhas (Kato et al. have "be under the guardianship of the buddhas");

2. They must plant the roots of many excellent qualities (Kato et al. have "plant the roots of virtue");

3. They must "collect" a number of "right concentrations" (Kato et al. have "enter the stage of correct concentration");

4. They must "launch" the thought of rescuing all living beings (Kato at al. have "aspire after the salvation of all the living").

Formally, these four conditions appear to refer to taking refuge, cultivating virtue or ethics, meditation, and generating *bodhicitta.*

The Sanskrit version notes that "the Dharma-circuit of the White Lotus of the True Dharma … is unbroken Thusness."

The bodhisattva Universally Worthy declares that he will protect anyone who in the coming degenerate age receives and keeps the Lotus Sutra. Those who read and recite the Lotus Sutra will see the body of Universally Worthy, who will instruct them in the Lotus Sutra. Specifically, they will attain three mantras or "charms": the "turning" mantra, the mantra "that can be turned to a hundred thousand myriads of millions of uses," and the mantra of "skill in the use of dharma-sounds." Kern has "talisman of preservation," "talisman of hundred thousand kotis" or tens or hundreds of millions; and "talisman of skill in all sounds." Hurvitz interprets these as "the charm that brings all other charms

into one's power"; the charm that "brings all manner of things into one's power"; and the charm "that enables one to understand all sounds." However, Kato et al. interpret them to refer to "the contemplation of the void," "the contemplation of existence," and "the contemplation of the Middle Path."

Universally Worthy presents a practice in which one aspires to the Lotus Sutra continuously for twenty-one days, culminating in a vision of Universally Worthy, "mounted on my white elephant with six tusks." Universally Worthy will teach him and give him a mantra, which he recites. Copying the Sutra alone will result in rebirth in the dimension of the thirty-three gods of the Vedic pantheon, called Trayastrimsa, the highest heaven that maintains a physical connection with the rest of the world, at the peak of Mount Sumeru, the north-south axis, at a height of 80,000 *yojanas*.[39]

The Lotus Sutra includes an interesting description of life in the Trayastrimsa heaven, including eighty-four thousand female musicians who entertain the inhabitants (cf. the "celestial maidens" of the Quran). This tradition of female

[39] About 533,867 km (331,729 miles). For comparison, the orbital distance of the moon from the earth varies between 363,104 and 405,696 km. Other authorities say that Trayastrimsa is only eighty *yojanas* (534 km or 332 miles) above the earth, near the top of the thermosphere, where aurora and satellites are usually found.

nymphs inhabiting higher worlds is also found in the Pali Canon.

Those who read, recite, and interpret the Lotus Sutra will be reborn in the Tushita ("satisfied" or "pleased") heaven, the residence of the Future Buddha, Maitreya, as well as Shakyamuni Buddha's mother, Maya.

Shakyamuni Buddha declares that those who receive, keep, read, recite, recall, cultivate, practise, and copy the Lotus Sutra have seen Shakyamuni Buddha himself and are "covered by his robe." They will be freed from passion, fondness for the "manuscripts of the external paths" (the implication being that the Lotus Sutra describes an "internal" or esoteric path), and wrongdoers. They will have the Power of Merit and attain complete and final emancipation. Those who mock them will be born blind. Those who criticize the Lotus Sutra will be reborn as lepers. Those who mock the Lotus Sutra itself will be reborn ugly, deformed, and diseased. This is of course the Law of Karma.

Upon the completion of this chapter the assembly of bodhisattvas all attain the mantra "that can be turned to a hundred thousand myriads of uses." The assembly rejoices at the Buddha's Word, bow to him, and depart.

Appendix I
The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings

The Innumerable Meanings Sutra was translated in 481 CE by Dharmajatayasas. The Sanskrit title is Avanta Nirdesa Sutra. Traditionally it is regarded as a prologue to the Lotus Sutra. It is referred to in chapter I of the Lotus Sutra. The title refers to the infinite diversity of phenomena, all of which arise out of formlessness, which is the true nature of reality.

Chapter 1. According to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha teaches the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings as a prologue to the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus says that the bodhisattvas watch over and are instructed by the Sutra. The Buddha enters into a meditation called "the station of innumerable meanings," characterized by immobility.

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings is divided into three chapters, on the virtues, preaching, and the ten merits (virtuous conduct, dharma preaching, and ten blessings in Gene Reeves's translation).

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings begins with the Buddha on Vulture Peak, accompanied by an assembly of twelve thousand monastics, eighty thousand bodhisattvas, all of whom have obtained the dharma body, i.e., arhantship and nirvana (see below), who know all the dharma ways, and understand the secret of the nature of reality, and a large number of human and non-human beings, including male and female Buddhist monastics and householders, kings, princes, and people in all stations of life.

Desire being dampened, the gateway to nirvana is opened by mindfulness of the breathing (the Tathagata's dwelling), and the cooling of the passions. The realization of interdependent origination and emptiness ameliorates suffering.

The bodhisattva called "Great Adornment" approaches the Buddha, worships him, and praises him in verse for his trans-dual illumination and dispassion, detached even from thinking, and thus having attained that which is beyond thinking, marked with all the signs of greatness. He declares that all living beings are spiritual.

The Buddha reveals himself to the assembly as a trans-dual body of light that is at the same time not a body, with symbolic features, the marks of a superior being, that are not features of a physical body. These are of course the thirty-two marks of a superior being.

Chapter 2. Great Adornment then asks the Buddha about the dharma of the Tathagata. The Buddha reveals that soon he will enter *parinirvana,* and that he will answer any questions. Everyone in the assembly asks the Buddha which doctrine facilitates the quick attainment of Perfect Enlightenment. The Buddha declares that the doctrine of Innumerable Meanings facilitates the quick attainment of Perfect Enlightenment. He declares this doctrine as follows:

> All dharmas were originally, will be, and are in themselves void in nature and form; they are neither great nor small, neither appearing nor disappearing, neither fixed nor movable, and neither advancing nor retreating; and they are nondual, just emptiness.

The question that Great Adornment asks and the Buddha's answer definitely confirms that wisdom is the salvific principle, everything else being skilled means (*upaya*). Thus, by perfect understanding one attains perfect enlightenment. The beginning and end of the path are paradoxically the same. Moreover, not all doctrines are equal. Some doctrines are truer and more powerful and effective at facilitating the attainment of perfect enlightenment (doctrine of the Power of Truth). According to the Innumerable Meanings Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, the doctrine just articulated is therefore the supreme and essential Buddhist teaching, consisting of the realization

that **every phenomenon and every moment is essentially empty in nature and form and non-dual or trans-dual, comprehending all contradictions within themselves and therefore inherently binary and non-binary, dual and trans-dual at the same time.**

Now it just so happens that this profoundly esoteric doctrine has become the central discovery of quantum physics, almost 2,400 years after the Buddha's enlightenment.

The Buddha goes on to instruct Great Adornment that because of discrimination and self-seeking suffering arises and human beings experience endless transmigration through the cycles of existence. The Buddha advises bodhisattvas to cultivate compassion for all living beings, and to observe the arising (*uppada*), development (*thiti*), and cessation (*bhanga*) of all changing phenomena, realizing that some phenomena produce good results and other phenomena produce bad results because of their nature, leading to pleasure and displeasure, happiness and suffering.

The bodhisattva should next observe that this fourfold process characterizes every moment and instant – nothing is essential and everything arises out of emptiness, cycles within cycles, processes within processes, with no "matter," no essential substance, at all. All is essential emptiness.

The Innumerable Meanings originate from one law. This one law is, namely, formlessness. Being formless, it is called the real aspect of things.

This theory of momentariness (*khanika-vado*) or universal flux produces a paradox, because every moment, being infinitesimal, must exist and not exist simultaneously. To be extended in space or time is to be substantive and thus illusory and transient. This paradox re-emerged in the 20th century in the split screen experiment of quantum physics (like Shrodinger's cat, which is both alive and dead at the same time, so before it goes through the double split the photon is neither a wave nor a particle). This tells us very clearly that the universe is not material in any ordinary sense.

Through this realization, living beings are disabused of their illusory desire for things, which is impossible, since everything is in flux, no desire can be satisfied, and attain the central point of realizing their true nature. Bodhisattvas aid suffering beings, which in turn results in happiness and perfect enlightenment for themselves and others.

Great Adornment is perplexed, complains that the Buddha's doctrine is incomprehensible, though he does not doubt it (and yet he seems to be uncertain at the same time), and asks him to explain the relationship between all of the previous doctrines taught by the Buddha and this singular new doctrine that he now says alone leads to perfect

enlightenment. He declares that this is the highest dharma, which leads to the realization of the tenth stage of the bodhisattva path (see below).

In reply, the Buddha declares that all of the bodhisattvas will attain perfect Buddhahood. He explains that hitherto as a result of sitting under the Bodhi tree for six years[40] he taught different beings according to their different natures, faculties, and attainments and what they needed to do at that time, and compares the doctrine of cleansing water that appears in many different forms, such as streams, rivers, wells, ponds, creeks, ditches, and seas, yet they all have the same essential cleansing quality, again echoing Laozi.

All through his teaching, however, the Buddha declares that the essential truth that all dharmas "are naturally vacant, ceaselessly transformed, and instantly born and destroyed," i.e., the doctrines of non-self-identity, change, and the chain of causation. This is the purifying water. Although it is a single teaching, according to the differences between beings it is perceived and understood by them differently and thus beings attain to different degrees of realization and develop different schools of thought and practice, all based on their personal preferences,

[40] This interpretation conflates the length of time that the Buddha practised asceticism with the attainment of enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree according to the Pali Canon and ignores his first two meditation teachers.

predelections, and prejudices. Thus, buddhas appear differently to different beings in different places and at different times. Similarly, early, middle, and late teachings do not have the same meaning. Only buddhas and tenth stage bodhisattvas can understand the ultimately true doctrine. Bodhisattvas who grasp this doctrine fully transcend mortality.

Thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas attain the meditation called Innumerable Meanings. Innumerable Meanings itself is a meditative realization, as indicated at the beginning of the Sutra, and thus a meditation of the *vipassana* ("insight") type. Clearly, the induction of such a meditative realization is the purpose of the Sutra.

Chapter 3. Great Adornment declares that the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings is three times profound. Those who hear the Sutra will obtain the divine powers;[41] the Four Noble Truths; the chain of causation (emptiness); the Six Perfections; the four degrees of attainment culminating in arhantship; and the aspiration to enlightenment (*bodhicitta*?), whereas those who do not hear it will never achieve Buddhahood. Great Adornment asks the Buddha to explain the Sutra, which is inconceivable and profound.

[41] Bunno et al. have "the realm of dharanis." Reeves has "entrance to incantations." The word *dharani* refers to spells, incantations, powers, or virtues (Bunno, et al., 1975). It is also translated in English as charms or talismans.

Referring to the "great direct way," the Buddha says that the Sutra enables people to attain Buddhahood quickly and without pain. He states that the Sutra comes from the place where the buddhas are and enables people to attain Buddhahood by awakening *bodhicitta,* love, ecstasy, dispassion, generosity, obedience, perseverance, assiduity, meditation, wisdom, salvation, the ten virtues, non-existence, non-retrogression, and non-defilement. Thus, cultivation of *bodhicitta* is the first inconceivable merit power (or "amazing power of blessing," in Reeves's translation) of the Sutra.

Perfectly understanding the doctrine of innumerable meanings is the second meritorious power of the Sutra. This doctrine has two aspects. First, it refers to the interior meaning of the teachings of the Buddha. Second, it refers to the self-propagation of the dharma, whereby meanings (memes) multiply themselves dynamically and thus create and perpetuate a continuous dharma development through history.

Achieving superlative compassion is the third meritorious power.

Achieving superlative cognition of the meaning of the dharma is the fourth meritorious power.

The Buddha compares himself to a king, the Sutra to a queen, and the bodhisattva to their son, alluding to a formula called in Cabala the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, referring

to "the secret law of the buddhas," each of whom rediscovers the dharma in, for, and by himself. Thus, dharma propagates itself through the lineage of the buddhas.

The fifth meritorious power of the Sutra is to enable those who keep, read, recite, and copy the Sutra to realize the bodhisattva way even though they still have faults and delusions, and convert living beings through their personal charisma.

The sixth meritorious power is that they will deliver beings from their delusions, making them overcome all suffering, and attain the law, the merit, and the way, equal to a Tathagata, by communicating the dharma to them.

The attainment of the rare or extraordinary mind and the Six Perfections is the seventh meritorious power. They attain confidence in the certainty of immortality while still alive; mortality and delusion are destroyed naturally; and they attain the seventh stage of a bodhisattva.

This is the third reference in the Sutra to the stages of the bodhisattva path or way.[42] Here the seventh inconceivable meritorious power or amazing blessing is identified with the seventh stage of a bodhisattva. The identity of the number

[42] Quant Tri, "The Ten Levels of the Bodhisattva" (Jan. 22, 2014, http://buddhajourney.net/the-ten-levels-of-the-bodhisattva). See also Prof. Jan Nattier, "Stages of the Path: The Origins of the Bodhisattva *Bhumis*" (YouTube video, 4/8/2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbFCXBcGdGE&t=3499).

as well as the previous references including the first stage of immobility suggest that the ten merit powers or blessings correspond to the ten stages of a bodhisattva. Below I have tabulated the common names of the stages and the merit powers or blessings to which they correspond in numerical order. The correspondences are significant and correspond to the conventional descriptions of the stages.

The Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva Way and the Merit Powers or Amazing Blessings

No.	Bodhisattva Stage	Merit Power or Amazing Blessing
REVERSIBLE		
1	Very Joyous	*bodhicitta*
2	Stainless	innumerable meanings
3	Light-Maker	*metta*
4	Radiant Intellect	secret dharma
5	Difficult to Master	*enthusiasmos*
6	Manifest	power of truth
IRREVERSIBLE		
7	Gone Afar	*bodhi*
8	Immovable (Arhant, Nirvana)	*dharmakaya*
9	Good Intelligence	*ecstasis*
10	Cloud of Dharma	*dharani*

The eighth meritorious power is the power of devotion to the Sutra as the body of the Buddha (*dharmakaya*).

The ninth meritorious power is the joyful leap into the unknown, rebirth.

The tenth meritorious power corresponds to the tenth stage of the bodhisattva way, called the dharma-cloud, characterized by the bodily realization of the divine power.

The ten stages are further divided into reversible and irreversible modes. The bodhisattva can fall back from the first six stages into a lower degree of spiritual cultivation. However, once one reaches the seventh degree the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood is certain.

In addition, the eighth-stage bodhisattva is technically equivalent to the attainment of arhantship and nirvana.

Great Adornment vows on behalf of himself and the assembly that they will propagate the dharma and that by their Power of Truth the dharma will be propagated throughout infinite worlds. This alludes of course to the doctrine of the Transfer of Merit.

In conclusion, one can see that the Innumerable Meanings Sutra is less a reaction against the Pali suttas than a deeper exegesis of the Pali recension, including references to the same essential doctrines, including the dharma body, the precepts, concentration (meditation), the salvific power of wisdom, liberation, insight into liberation, the dust of desire, nirvana, the twelvefold chain of causation (interdependent origination), suffering, the non-dual, the body, the thirty-two characteristics and the eighty features

of a great man, the mental body, mantras, *dharanis,* emptiness, tranquility, samsara, the six classes of transmigration, *metta,* the three characteristics, the four modes, the theory of momentariness, dharma nature, the four fruits, the three paths, the 84,000 teachings, skilled means, indifference, the continuity of the *Buddhavacana,* the Power of Truth, the Four Noble Truths, the Six Perfections, the Tathagata, the Tathagata's dwelling, *parinirvana,* and more.

Thus ends the Innumerable Meanings Sutra.

Appendix II
The Sutra of Contemplation of the Dharma Practice of Universal Sage Bodhisattva (Samantabhadra)

The Samantabhadra Meditation Sutra (referred to hereinafter as the Meditation Sutra) is a Chinese sutra translated in the first half of the 5th century by Dharmamitra. Two prior translations have been lost, and no Sanskrit original has been found. It is traditionally published as an epilogue to the Lotus Sutra proper, which is supported by the text of the Meditation Sutra itself. Unlike the other two sutras, it is not divided into chapters.

The Sutra opens with the Buddha at the Great Forest Monastery of Vaisali, three months before his passing on (*parinirvana*). Vaisali was the capital of the Vajjian confederacy, an early quasi-democracy. The Buddha

modelled the constitution of the sangha after the Vajjian confederacy. Vaisali was also the birthplace of the 24th guide (*tīrthankara*) of Jainism, as well as the location of the Second Buddhist Council (*c* 334 BCE). The Buddha announces to the monastics that he will die in three months.

Ananda, Mahakasyapa, and Maitreya all rise from their seats and, after circumambulating the Buddha, ask the Buddha how the bodhisattvas will be able to follow the path without the Buddha's guidance. The Buddha replies that previously he has taught the way of one truth (*ekayana*), but now he will teach a method of meditation, beginning with an explanation of the Land of Pure Wonder, also taught in the Flower Garland Sutra (Avatamsaka Sutra), whereby one may see the material body of Universal Sage Bodhisattva (Samantabhadra, the bodhisattva of practice and meditation); the stupa of Prabhutaratna (Abundant Treasure) Buddha, which appears in the Lotus Sutra; Shakyamuni Buddha and the buddhas who embody him; and purify the six senses.

An interesting point about this exercise is that it is available to householders, not just monastics. Ananda, Mahakasyapa, and Maitreya all ask, "Without cutting off their afflictions and renouncing the five desires, how can they purify their sense organs and completely rid themselves of their sins? With the natural pure eyes received at birth

from their parents, and without leaving the world of the five desires, how can they see past their hindrances?" This corresponds to a similar passage in the Prajnaparamita: "Having given but a little gift, having guarded but a little morality, having developed but a little patience, having exerted but a little vigour, having entered trance but a little, having developed wisdom but a little, a Bodhisattva, a great being, who wants by skilful conversion to make this small amount for all beings on account of the knowledge of all modes into an immeasurable and incalculable one, should train in perfect wisdom."

All bodhisattvas are essentially householders, since the Bodhisattva himself, throughout all his past lives, is nowhere mentioned as having been ordained, including in his final rebirth (he was however reborn 83 out of 530 times [but only 16%] as an ascetic).[43] Here we see an intimation of the fundamental premise of Tantra, that spiritual practice is reoriented toward the householders as the monastic age, which the Buddha said would be limited to one or two thousand years, recedes and the age of degeneration continues,[44] using powerful compensatory techniques like

[43] See Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth-Stories* (London: Geo. Routledge, 1880), Table VII, "The Bodhisats," p. 246.

[44] The monastic age ended between 600 and 1600 CE, according to the modern reckoning, whereas the *mappo,* the "third" or "degenerate age" of a thousand years began in 1012 (some say 1052 or 1100). The Buddha also referred to the "degenerate age" of his own time, comparable

seclusion, prostration, visualization, concentration, chanting, and invocations, vows, burning incense, scattering flowers, hanging paintings, flags, canopies, etc., etc. A thousand years after the Buddha's passing on is about 600 CE. According to the Wikipedia, Buddhist Vajrayana tantras began to appear about the sixth or seventh centuries CE – right on schedule!

The Buddha states that those who practice for one day, 21 days, 49 days, or one to three lifetimes, will be able to see Samantabhadra, depending on their personal purity. However, Samantabhadra's body is unlimited, manifesting in an infinite variety of different forms. He is represented as an enormous radiant white elephant with six tusks and seven legs moving through a field of seven lotus flowers. He holds a golden flower that has not yet blossomed in his trunk. The Sutra implies that this is the form in which people will see the body of Samantabhadra, but it also has the appearance of a visualization exercise, such as we find in the Tantric tradition, with incredibly elaborate symbolic details that we will not go into here. The highly ritualistic character of the Sutra confirms this interpretation. The golden flower is said to blossom because of the practice,

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to the Hindu doctrine of the Kali Yuga. According to the Mahasamnipata Sutra a new Buddha will appear 2,500 years after the *parinirvana* to restore the dharma. According to the modern reckoning of the date of the *parinirvana* this would indicate the late 21st or early 22nd century.

suggesting the attainment of the clear light or Buddha nature (*tathagatagarbha*). Compare the Secret of the Golden Flower, a 17th century Taoist classic popularized by Wilhelm Baynes and Carl Gustav Jung. Although nominally Taoist, the meditation technique described in the book has been described as "Zen with details."

Samantabhadra is seated cross-legged on the back of the elephant that represents him, surrounded by a multicoloured aura. Every pore of his body radiates golden light.

The "follower" who wishes to see the physical body of Samantabhadra shows respect to the buddhas in all directions six times day and night, rather like the followers of Islam who pray five times a day.[45] The Sutra states that all people are to be regarded as the Buddha, and all living beings as one's parents. The follower entreats the bodhisattvas to teach them the dharma, and because of the merit ("wisdom-power") of the former, they will realize the dharma. This is the first stage of the meditation.

Followers are enjoined to meditate on the Mahayana to the point where they dream of it. Samantabhadra will inspire their minds and they will realize the dharma, until

[45] Bunno points out that this was at sunset, the beginning of the night, middle of the night, end of the night (sunrise?), early morning, and at midday.

they see imaginary buddhas in all directions and experience bliss.

The followers are then enjoined to intensify their repentance, an interesting word with Judaeo-Christian associations. "Repentance" is achieved by meditating on "suchness" (*tatha*), "the true aspect of reality," and the Mahayana sutras. In other words, "repentance" in this context is equated to the realization of the "true aspect of reality."

Master Chi Yii (538–597 CE), the founder of the Tiantai sect, further expanded the idea of confession through sutras, by establishing a self-confessional ritual consisting of nine steps. This is called the Dharma Blossom Samadhi Confessional Ritual.[46]

In any case, followers should prostrate to the buddhas in all directions, and then kneel with palms together and pray to the buddhas. Interestingly, this aspect of the practice implicit in the Meditation Sutra, in which the follower kneels and prays in the direction of Vulture Peak (Griddharaj Parvat) in India, anticipates the Muslim obeisance to the Qibla (first Jerusalem, then Mecca) beginning in 610 CE, less than two hundred years later.[47]

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[46] See David J. Kalapuhana, *Buddhist Thought and Ritual* (Mylapore, India: Motilal Banarsidass), p. 176.

[47] Muslims are also buried in a posture similar to the posture in which the Buddha himself was supposed to have died. Vulture Peak is located at 24°18' N, 81°15' E. Griddharaj Parvat is unique for the number of

When completely purified, Samantabhadra will appear and teach them all the dharma in both waking and sleeping states. After 21 days of this, the follower will acquire the "revolving incantation." Bunno translates this as "dharani of revolution." As we discussed in connection with the Lotus, a *dharani* is a sort of mantra, inscribed on a charm, amulet, or talisman, often in circular or other geometric patterns similar to a mandala, by means of which the follower will acquire a perfect understanding of dharma.

Because of their purification of the senses, the follower will develop clairaudience, clairvoyance, and other psychic powers, also described in the Pali Canon. As a result of this practice the follower will experience a vision of Shakyamuni Buddha emitting infinite rays of golden light from the pores of his body, in each of which are hundreds of millions of transformed buddhas, numerous as the grains of sand of the Ganges. It is also similar to a fractal, referring to the infinite divisibility of phenomena, i.e., the principle of

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vultures that congregate there, not only in India but in the world. The vulture is a symbol of the production of life out of death, and thus of renewal and rebirth, as well as cosmic order. In certain forms of archaic Middle Eastern shamanism, the shaman assumes the form of a vulture to travel to the land of the dead. The Tibetan Buddhist and comparable Iranian/Zoroastrian practices of sky burial have their origin in the early neolithic culture of Anatolia and the Near East. It is mentioned prominently in the Pali Canon as the Buddha's favourite retreat near Rajagaha (present day Rajgir), capital of ancient Magadha, and the location of many suttas.

differentiation or proliferation and continuity that is also the essential principle of samsara. In other words, the dharma manifests in an infinite diversity of ways, corresponding to the doctrines of the 84,000 skilled means (*upaya*), "innumerable meanings," infinite numbers of forms of Samantabhadra previously alluded to, etc.

Samantabhdara emits a ray of light from the centre of the forehead (*ajna chakra*) into the heart (*anahata chakra*) of the follower, resulting in a sudden and great awakening, including the memory of past lives. The follower will acquire the revolving *dharani* and billions of other *dharanis.*

The six methods to purify the sense organs are to meditate on the Buddha, dharma, sangha, morality, generosity, and the higher planes of existence, which together express the aspiration to become a buddha (*bodhicitta*), followed by confession and repentance. These concepts are also found in the Pali Canon of course, in connection with the lunar *upavasatha* (Pali *uposatha*) gathering, where the sangha meets and recites the *pratimoksha,* the rules of the order (a formulary for releasing monastics by penances, essentially a form of karma yoga). If anyone in the gathering has broken the *pratimoksha,* the sangha is purified by either the expulsion or confession of the monastic, by which the karma of the sin is expiated, with certain exceptions, like sex, stealing, murder, and lying, which result in automatic expulsion from the sangha. The

Meditation Sutra is based on a similar premise for the individual and states that these six methods are essentially equivalent to *bodhicitta.* Such a person becomes a "follower" and their mind will become orderly. This is called the mark of the first stage of the purification of the eyes.

You may recall that when the Buddha was considering not teaching, he decided to teach for the sake of those whose eyes are less covered with "dust." In the Meditation Sutra there is a direct allusion to the "dust of the passions," suggesting that what the Buddha meant originally is that some people are more or less (dis)passionate. "Dust" also refers to matter or materiality, and the process of objectification by which we become attached to the objects of our imagination. This is another example of how the Lotus Sutra and the rest interpret the Pali tradition. More passionate people, regardless of gender, are reborn as women. The feminine is the somatic polarity according to Jung, the principle of the body and matter, but this does not mean that women are incapable of attaining nirvana. The Buddha explicitly said that they are, and established the *bhikkhunisangha* on this basis, at a time and in a place where women were regarded as chattel and inferior, despite the fact that many ancient rishis were women. The Buddha also said that a sangha that excludes women is incomplete and imperfect. Thus, the Buddha affirms reverence for the female, the essential principle of Tantra.

In addition, the Meditation Sutra teaches that the forms and bodies of buddhas do not become extinct. The Buddha taught this when he rejected nihilism, but misinterpreted by the Theravada, who equate nirvana with annihilation and the attainment of the Tathagata with literal extinction rather than with the transcendence of involuntary rebirth. Rather, their merit continues to inspire beings to purify themselves through aspiration. In the language of the Sutra, the "dharma water" of the "wisdom eyes" that cleanse and purify are the merciful and compassionate tears of Avalokiteshvara, who hears the cries of the world.

In what is now clearly a practice, the follower kneels on their right knee and repents six times a day. As a result, the stupa of Abundant Treasure Buddha springs out of the earth as in chapter XI of the Lotus Sutra. Here we clearly see that the Lotus Sutra is being interpreted esoterically as a metaphor for the attainment of a series of spiritual states, culminating in enlightenment that is represented in positive rather than in negative terms, i.e., from the perspective of enlightenment itself rather than from the perspective of suffering. This is indeed the essential difference between the Hinayana and the Mahayana. The stupa of enlightenment represents a primal force that shatters the inertia of matter and manifests a luminous celestial phenomenon. Shakyamuni opens the "door" of the stupa and the follower experiences a vision of Abundant Treasures

Buddha, as a brilliant, fractally self-proliferating being who is the real body (*dharmakaya*) of the Buddha.

By recognizing that consciousness is defiled through the influence of the senses, one can free oneself from attachment to each of the senses in turn by the exercise of repentance. The process is repeated for each of the six senses - eyes, ears, nose, tongue, mind, and body - that are each purified thereby. Similarly, this exercise is repeated six times per day.

These teachings are attributed to a "voice in the sky," which encourages and instructs the follower. The "voice in the sky" is frequently found in ancient literature. Before we discount it as purely mythical, we should remember the daemon of Socrates, which he actually heard. Even as recently as the 18th century, we have the example of William Blake, showing that visions and clairaudient experiences are not inherently fictitious. Julian Jaynes argues in *The Breakdown of Consciousness in the Bicameral Mind* that ancient man commonly experienced such phenomena. The UFO connection can also not be discounted, in view of other evidence in the Pali Canon and elsewhere.

The Sutra reiterates what I have mentioned frequently, that salvation is by the practice of wisdom. Wisdom, the cure for ignorance, is the inherently salvific principle. The Meditation Sutra's teaching of mind is familiar:

> If you contemplate your mind, you will find no mind, except the mind that comes from perverse conceptions. The mind with such conceptions arises from delusion. Like the wind in the sky, it has no grounding. Such a character of things neither appears nor disappears. … the thought of self is itself empty, nether sin nor virtue is our master. … all things are neither permanent nor destroyed. If one repents like this, meditating on one's mind, one finds no mind. Things also do not dwell in things. All things are liberated, show the truth of extinction, and are calm and tranquil. Such a thing is called great repentance, sublime repentance, repentance without sin, the destruction of consciousness of mind. People who practice this repentance are pure in body and mind, like flowing water, not attached to things.

This language is worthy of Laozi or a Gnostic text. Previously we questioned the use of the word "repentance" in the Sutra. Here we learn that "repentance" is actually meditation on "no mind," whereby body and mind are purified. Zen Buddhism was doubtlessly inspired by this passage. Later on the Sutra says that "If you want to repent, you should sit upright / And reflect on the true nature of things." Clearly, what the Sutra means by repentance, while it may include the Christian connotation of confession, also goes beyond this conventional definition, analogous to the original meaning of *metanoia,* conventionally translated "repentance" (e.g., in the King James Bible), but which literally means "change of mind." Note the adumbration of

Tantra in the vaguely libertine reference to the Buddha being beyond good and evil, which one also finds in the Pali. The Buddha transcends morality, which he also disdains. Like the Taoist sage, he lives in a perfectly effortless and spontaneous accord with his environment. Note also that the enlightened mind's perception of samsara has subtly changed. Without attachment to phenomena, the Buddha sees no difference between samsara and nirvana. The illusion of samsara has disappeared like a mirage, revealing the true landscape of reality. For the "destruction of consciousness of mind," Bunno has "destruction of discrimination." Postmodernism has caught up with the Buddha only after two and a half millennia.

"the mind is like a monkey,
Never resting for a moment."

"The body, master of its organs,
Dances freely amongst these six harmful faculties
Without obstacle,
Like dust swirling in the wind."

"The so-called six methods
Purify the six sense organs."

The Buddha explains to Ananda how the sutras are the eyes of the Buddha, the reading and reciting of which are all

that is needed to attain enlightenment (the salvific wisdom principle again). Five kinds of eyes and three kinds of bodies are distinguished but not explained. However, we know from other sources that the five eyes are the eyes of flesh; the divine eye, by means of which one perceives the operation of karmic causality; the wisdom eye, which perceives the essentially empty nature of phenomenal existence; the dharma eye, which sees (i.e., realizes) reality; and the Buddha eye, which sees (i.e., accesses) infinite information. The eye itself is a symbol of the vector of attention or the quantum "act of observation."

The three bodies are the nominal, energetic, and real bodies of the Buddha (*nirmankaya, sambhogakaya,* and *dharmakaya* respectively).

The Sutra recommends that the disciples (not followers, note) meet in a graveyard or under the trees of a monastery. It alludes to "the strong power of reflecting," i.e., *sati,* mindfulness, "remembering," or reflexivity, and states that by this means they will see the body of the celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas and become buddhas themselves. The Mahayana has the power to destroy the karmic tendencies (*samskaras*) accumulated during "hundreds of myriads of thousands of billions of eons." They should purify themselves by bathing, putting on clean clothes, burning incense, living in seclusion, and reading and meditating on the Mahayana sutras. One should meditate on

Samantabhadra, the archetypal bodhisattva. This is, according to the Sutra, the one true meditation (see appendix).

Facility in this meditation confers perfection in the bodhisattva precepts without the requirement of any special initiation, i.e., it is available to everyone, including monastics, householders, and those with or without a teacher. Through this powerful practice one will realize the fivefold dharma body consisting of precepts, meditation, wisdom, liberation, and insight into liberation, which are distinguished.

The Sutra concludes with a recommendation to practise five repentances: meditation on the first principle of emptiness (*shunyata*), fulfilling one's filial duty, ruling justly, practising fasting and abstaining from killing, and believing in the law of karma, the *ekayana* (the "single" or "universal vehicle"), and the non-extinction of the buddhas.

When one abstracts the actual instructions from the Meditation Sutra in a systematic way one discovers a synthetic eightfold and sixteenfold repetitive structure consisting of (1) recitation, including invoking the name of the Buddha; (2) concentration or meditation; (3) repentance and confession; (4) making vows or affirmations, of which there are sixteen (see appendix); (5) respect and reverence (probably implying prostration, kneeling, and joining the palms together); (6) offerings, consisting of burning incense,

scattering flowers, and hanging flags, paintings, and canopies; (7) celebration, devotion, praise, and aspiration; and (perhaps separately) (8) circumambulating stupas. The rite implied is performed in the direction of Vulture Peak and is repeated six times daily, similar to the Islamic religion. A period of isolation or seclusion, as in a spiritual retreat, is also implied. This rite or retirement is held to purify the six sense organs, cultivate wisdom, and ultimately result in the attainment of Buddhahood. The Tiantai have a rite of Dharma Confession that appears to be related to this.

I have appended the vows or affirmations.

The Vows or Affirmations

First Affirmation

If I have any blessings stored up, surely I should see Universal Sage soon. Honourable Universal Fortune please show me your physical body!

Second Affirmation

Great kind ones, great compassionate ones, out of pity for me, please teach the Dharma for me!

Third Affirmation

Thanks to the Great Vehicle, I have been able to see great leaders. Because of the powers of great leaders, I have also been able to see buddhas. Though I have seen these buddhas, still I have not seen them completely. When I

close my eyes I see the buddhas, but when I open my eyes I lose sight of them.

Fourth Affirmation

The buddhas, the world-honoured ones have the ten powers, courage, the eighteen unique qualities, great compassion, great kindness, and the three kinds of mental stability. These buddhas, always living embodied in this world, have the finest form. What is the sin that makes me fail to see them?

Fifth Affirmation

Due to what sin have I only seen earth of jewels, seats of jewels, and jewel trees, but have not seen the buddhas?

Sixth Affirmation

The Tathagata, the World's Hero, is always in this world. Out of pity for me, please reveal yourself to me.

Seventh Affirmation

May I be cleansed and purified by the Dharma water of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the wisdom-eyes!

Eighth Affirmation

I now repent for the heavy sins of my eyes. My eyes are such an obstacle and are so tainted that I am blind and can see nothing at all. With your great kindness, may the Buddha have mercy on me and protect me! Universal Sage

Bodhisattva, accompanied by countless bodhisattvas from all of the directions, rides the ship of the great Dharma, the ship that carries all beings to the other side. My one wish is that out of pity for me my no-good eyes will be purified of the hindrances that come from the bad and evil things that I have done in the past.

Ninth Affirmation

Why can I only see Shakyamuni Buddha and the buddhas who embody him, but not the stupa or remaining whole body of Abundant Treasures Buddha? The stupa of Abundant Treasures Buddha is always living, never extinct. My eyes are polluted by evil. This is why I cannot see the stupa.

Tenth Affirmation

Great Teacher, teach me to repent of my faults.

Eleventh Affirmation

Truly enlightened World Honoured One, reveal yourself and bear testimony for me. With the sutras of the Expansive Teaching you are the master of compassion. My one request is that you look upon me and hear what I say. For many eons, until I had this body, because of my ears I was deluded by sounds and attached to hearing them, just as lacquer sticks to grass. When I hear evil sounds, a pervasive poison of affliction arises, deluding me and attaching me to

everything, without resting even a little. Bad sounds wear on my nerves and make me fall into the three destinies. Now, understanding this for the first time returning to the world-honoured ones I confess and repent of it.

Twelfth Affirmation

Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha! Praise to the stupa of Abundant Treasures Buddha! Praise to all the buddhas in the ten directions embodying Shakyamuni Buddha!

Thirteenth Affirmation

Praise to the Buddha Good Virtue in the eastern direction and to the buddhas who embody him!

Fourteenth Affirmation

During the innumerable eons of my previous lives, I craved aromas, tastes, and feelings from touch and did many evil things. For this reason, for innumerable lives I have always found myself born in various undesirable bodies, including those of beings in purgatories, hungry spirits, animals, beings in remote places, and people of wrong views.

Fifteenth Affirmation

The buddhas, the world-honored ones, are always alive in this world. Because of hindrances due to my actions in the past, even though I have faith in the Expansive Teaching, I cannot clearly see buddhas. Now I take refuge in the

buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha, truly enlightened, World-Honoured One, I beg you just to be my teacher. Manjushri, great compassionate one, I beg you to use your wisdom to instruct me in the pure teachings of bodhisattvas. Maitreya Bodhisattva, sun of superior and great kindness, out of sympathy for me, you should listen to my pleas to receive the teachings of bodhisattvas. Buddhas in all directions, reveal yourselves and testify for me. Great bodhisattvas, superior and great teachers, since we extol your names, protect all living beings. Help and protect us! Today I have received and embraced the sutras of the Expansive Teaching. Even if I should lose my life, fall into a purgatory, and suffer endlessly, I would never harm or slander the true Dharma of the buddhas. Therefore, Shakyamuni Buddha, for this reason and by the power of this blessing, be my teacher now! Manjushri, be my educator! Maitreya of the world to come, I beg you to instruct me in the Dharma! Buddhas in all directions, I beg you to teach me true wisdom! Bodhisattvas of great virtue I beg you to be my companions! Due to the profound and mysterious meanings of the Great Vehicle sutras, I now take refuge in the Buddha, take refuge in the Dharma, and take refuge in the monastic community.

Sixteenth Affirmation

Today I have aspired to awakening. May the blessings from this save all the living!

Appendix III
Lotus Sutra Chapter Titles and Their Abbreviated Forms[48]

1.	Jo (序品)	Introduction
2.	Hōben (方便品)	Expedient Means
3.	Hiyu (譬喩品)	Simile and Parable
4.	Shinge (信解品)	Belief and Understanding
5.	Yakusōyu (薬草喩品)	Parable of the Medicinal Herbs
6.	Juki (授記品)	Bestowal of Prophecy

[48] Adapted from the Sokka Gakkai Nichiren Buddhism Library, Appendix I, https://www.nichirenlibrary.org/en/wnd-1/Appendix/I.

7.	Kejōyu (化城喩品)	Parable of the Phantom City
8.	Gohyaku deshi juki (五百弟子受記品)	Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples
	Gohyaku deshi (五百弟子品)	Five Hundred Disciples
9.	Ju gaku mugaku ninki (授学無学人記品)	Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts
	Ninki (人記品)	Prophecies
10.	Hosshi (法師品)	Teacher of the Law
11.	Ken hōtō (見宝塔品)	Emergence of the Treasure Tower
	Hōtō (宝塔品)	Treasure Tower
12.	Daibadatta (提婆達多品)	Devadatta
13.	Kanji (勧持品)	Encouraging

		Devotion
14.	Anrakugyō (安楽行品)	Peaceful Practices
15.	Jūji yujutsu (従地涌出品)	Emerging from the Earth
16.	Nyorai juryō (如来寿量品)	Life Span of the Thus Come One
	Juryō (寿量品)	Life Span
17.	Fumbetsu kudoku (分別功徳品)	Distinctions in Benefits
18.	Zuiki kudoku (随喜功徳品)	Benefits of Responding with Joy
	Zuiki (随喜品)	Responding with Joy
19.	Hosshi kudoku (法師功徳品)	Benefits of the Teacher of the Law
20.	Jō fukyō bosatsu (常不軽菩薩品)	Bodhisattva Never Disparaging

	Fukyō (不軽品)	Never Disparaging
21.	Nyorai jinriki (如来神力品)	Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One
	Jinriki (神力品)	Supernatural Powers
22.	Zokurui (嘱累品)	Entrustment
23.	Yakuō bosatsu honji (薬王菩薩本事品)	Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King
	Yakuō (薬王品)	Medicine King
24.	Myō'on bosatsu (妙音菩薩品)	Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound
	Myō'on (妙音品)	Wonderful Sound
25.	Kanzeon bosatsu fumon (観世音菩薩普門品)	Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva

		Perceiver of the World's Sounds
	Kannon (観音品)	Perceiver of the World's Sounds
	Fumon (普門品)	Universal Gateway
26.	Darani (陀羅尼品)	Dhāranī
27.	Myōshōgon-nō honji (妙荘厳王本事品)	Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment
	Myōshōgon-nō (妙荘厳王品)	King Wonderful Adornment
28.	Fugen bosatsu kambotsu (普賢菩薩勧発品)	Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy
	Kambotsu (勧発品)	Encouragements
	Fugen (普賢品)	Universal Worthy

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